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THE OWL'S NEST IN THE CITY.

CHAPTER I.

"Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind."—SHAKSPEARE.

LEADING out of B— Street in the City, there is—perhaps I should say was, it is long since I have seen the spot—an old-fashioned little square, called X Court. The entrance to it is under a low, broad archway; and the square itself is composed, if my memory serve me well, of not more than four or five houses. The pavement of the court is grass-grown and decayed; the houses, which were once handsome family mansions, have a melancholy, tumbledown, and, as the Scotch would say, uncanny look. The entrance halls are large and lofty, but rendered very dark and gloomy by the thick crust of dirt and cobwebs on the windows. The staircases are broad and handsome; but the carved balustrades are so crooked and worm-eaten, that one is tempted to believe it is only their excessive greasiness that prevents them from crumbling under the touch.

I believe all of these houses are now divided into separate sets of offices or chambers, but the house in the right-hand corner of the court, wherein the events I am about to relate took place, was, at the time I speak of, entirely in the occupation of one legal firm, the firm of Prescott and Earle. The offices of this firm were upon the ground floor. The upper stories were inhabited by Mr. Prescott, with his family, and his partner, Mr. Earle.

I think I must have been about eight years of age when my mother died, leaving me to the guardianship of my Uncle Prescott; and my nurse told me I was to go to London to live with him. My father died in my infancy, and my mother had lived since his death in a retired village in Wales, from which I was now despatched to London in charge of one of the clerks of the lawyer who had arranged her affairs. This clerk appeared to regard me simply as a sort of peculiarly inconvenient parcel to be delivered to my uncle, the right side

upwards. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the sinking of heart that came over me—it must have been an instinctive prevision of ill—when, after our long and weary journey to London, we entered X Court. Having been lamed by an accident which occurred soon after my birth, and being extremely delicate in health, I had been from my infancy accustomed to live the life of a petted invalid. Incapable of joining in the sports of other children, I had been my mother's constant companion, and had already learned to observe and to think much, at an age when most children have done little else than laugh and play. No doubt Mr. Slack, the clerk who accompanied me to London, must have been much bored with his sickly little companion. He was not unkind to me; but he made no attempt to render the journey less wearisome. Perhaps he was discouraged by my tears, for I think the only effort at conversation he made during the whole journey was when he asked me how old I was, and received for answer that I did not know.

"Too old to be such a cry-baby, anyhow," said he; but perceiving that my tears flowed the faster for this, he began to whistle "Yankee Doodle." To this day I never hear the tune without a vision rising before me of Mr. Slack on the coach seat opposite me, whistling and looking at me all the while with his little green eyes half shut, his hands deep in his trowsers pockets, and his whole attitude expressive of lordly contempt.

This imposing spectacle awed me for a time, but I soon became sufficiently accustomed to it to lapse again into tears, partly caused by grief for my mother, and partly by fears of my unknown uncle. When I was too tired to cry any more, I went to sleep; and, indeed, my whole recollection of that interminable journey, by coach and railway from Wales to London, might be drearily summed up as sleep and tears.

The noise and bustle of London completely terrified me, and when, after the roar of Cheapside, we turned into the comparative quiet of B—— Street, I remember that I felt a sensation of great relief, and shut my eyes in the hope of forgetting my woes in sleep again; but Mr. Slack shook me roughly by the arm, saying: "Hold up, little one; here we are!"

At that moment the hackney coach drove under the dark archway of X Court, and a chill ran through me—prophetic enough, though I knew it not—at the sudden gloom. I would have accepted any amount of noise and bustle then, in exchange for the ghostly look of my new home. The dark hall, into the depths of which my eyes, wearied by that morning's journey through the glare of an August sun, could not penetrate, was an awful place to me; and though I had certainly no reason to love my companion, I remember that I clung very closely to him as we stumbled up the uneven stairs, and begged him very earnestly not to leave me in that horrid house.

"Nonsense, child," said Mr. Slack, sharply, knocking at the outer door on the first floor; "why this is your uncle's house, where you are going to live!"

The ready tears ran down my cheeks again at this; but I attempted no further entreaties. At that moment the door was opened by a dirty, ugly, old woman, with a broom in her hand, a cap of no particular shape perched very much awry on the top of her head, and some straggling grey hair sticking out fantastically underneath it. I was deeply read in fairy lore, and instantly set her down in my own mind for a malevolent Mother Bunch. She took me gently by the hand, however; and wiping away my tears with her greasy apron, recently intimate with raw onions, she said to Mr. Slack—

"So this is the little lame nephew, I suppose?"

"Yes, ma'am," said he; "and a precious bore he's been to bring!"

I hid my face against the apron on hearing this, while the old woman rejoined—

"Ah, of course—of course! Children *is*, you know, a great bother!"

At this encouraging remark my tears flowed faster than ever. I had seen Mr. Slack's contempt for my weakness, but had unconsciously attributed it to the peculiar loftiness of that gentleman's spirit; and this view of the case was new to me. I had never dreamed that children were "a bother." My mother and her one servant, who had been my nurse, had certainly thought nothing a trouble that could brighten the existence of their lame darling; and, with the unconscious egotism of childhood, I had accepted their untiring devotion without for an instant realising the trouble I gave. A sense of degradation was now added to my former dejection, which was quite overwhelming to me.

"Mr. Prescott ain't in," continued the old woman; "most like he's in the office below—first door on the right when you get down the stairs. You can leave the child with me."

"All right," said Mr. Slack, running downstairs without a word of adieu to me.

The old woman shut the door; my last brittle link with Wales was broken, and I was alone among strangers.

She now took me up in her arms and carried me upstairs to her kitchen, which, strangely enough (but everything was odd and strange in that queer house), was on the top floor. Then seating me on the table before her, she said, "There, there, be quiet, can't you? what are you crying for now, eh?" The words were rough, but the tone was not unkindly. I did not exactly know what I was crying for at that minute, but I knew, vaguely and generally, that I was intensely wretched; so making an unconscious summary of that wretchedness and its cause, I sobbed out, "Mother's dead."

Hereupon the old woman took me in her arms again, and sitting down upon a low chair by the fire, began to rock backwards and

forwards, saying, "Ah, poor lamb, worse luck, worse luck ! but then, you see, the Lord took her, and she's gone to heaven ; and isn't that a deal better than if she'd run away and left you ?"

I could see but little meaning in her words ; but there was pity and consolation in her tone, and to be once again held to any woman's bosom and spoken softly to, after two whole days of contempt and Yankee Doodle, was soothing and comforting to my spirit. My tears gradually grew less and less, and at last ceased altogether.

The old woman then gave me some tea and cold meat ; and when I had finished she said, "Now come and see your cousins."

Taking me by the hand she led me first through a long unlighted passage, passing by several half-open doors, leading to ghostly-looking unfurnished rooms, and then down stairs into the large hall on the first floor, where I was very uncomfortably surprised by seeing a hidden doorway in the pannelling suddenly open, and a tall, pale, thin man appear at the top of a narrow-winding staircase in the dark opening. "There's your uncle, child," said my conductor ; "make your bow."

I believe I did attempt some sort of an awkward bow ; but the expression of my uncle's face was cold and uninviting, and he had made his appearance in so supernatural a manner—the very door having vanished again,—that I felt anything but comfortable, and clung very tightly to the old woman's gown, resisting her attempts to push me towards him.

"So this is poor little Ned, is it ?" said my uncle. "Is he very lame, Mrs. Withers ? Come here, child."

I did not stir.

"Lame enough, indeed, sir," answered Mrs. Withers, "and never likely to be good for much, I'm thinking, worse luck."

"Hum !" said my uncle, "he looks sharp enough in all conscience ; why, his face is like a weasel."

It has often struck me as strange that grown people will not unfrequently discuss a child's defects in its presence, with as much coolness and indifference as if it were a statue. Yet children are painfully sensitive on such subjects, and their averted looks and tingling cheeks generally speak plainly enough of the fluttering and burning of the little heart that is needlessly wounded by such thoughtless and unfeeling words.

My uncle now opened the door of one of the front rooms, and beckoning to me, said, "Here, Ned, come and see your cousins."

Curiosity impelled me forward. I left Mrs. Withers' protection and followed him. "Here, James," he cried, addressing a boy of about my own age, who was seated at the table laboriously inscribing moral instances in a copy-book, "this is your little Welsh cousin, Ned. Dick, you rascal, get down this moment ; how dare you spoil the furniture in that way !"

This was addressed to a fine, handsome boy, who was sitting astride on one of the arms of an old black horsehair sofa, and flogging the same with all his might, evidently glorying in the blissful illusion that he was galloping at full speed.

The lad addressed as James came shyly towards me and timidly held out his hand. He was nearly as pale and cold-looking as his father, and as he fixed his dark eyes on me, I was struck with the strange resemblance between them. Before I had time to take his hand, Dick, who had jumped off the sofa when my uncle spoke, ran up to me, saying, "How d'ye do, cousin? can you play at horses? See here, you shall be my horse."

His sweet, frank, cordial smile delighted me, and I held out my arms willingly enough, in order to allow him to fasten around them the cord he held in his hand, when my uncle said, fiercely, "Hold your tongue, sir; don't you see the lad is lame? This is your cousin James," he added, turning to me; "take his hand, he will play with you."

I did as I was bid; but I could not remove my eyes from the rebel, Dick, who was making faces at my uncle and sparring at him behind his back.

Led by my fixed look of astonishment, Mr. Prescott turned round, and, catching him in the act, hit him a sharp box on the ear, which the offender received without a cry, though his face turned crimson with rage and pain. He flew at my uncle like a wild cat, striving to bite and scratch in return; when Mrs. Withers, coming in, got between them, saying, "Let him be, sir, let him be; blood is blood, worse luck, and it ain't no fault of his'n."

These mysterious words appeared to produce some effect. Mr. Prescott turned away and looked at the copy-book in which James had been writing. "Good lad," he said, with some approach to softness of manner, "you'll soon be of use in the office, I declare. Mrs. Withers," he added, "I am going out; let the children play together and make acquaintance before they go to bed."

Mrs. Withers gave a sort of grunt in reply. She did not appear to be of a demonstrative nature.

As soon as the door shut upon Mr. Prescott, Dick buried his red face in the greasy apron, and burst into a passion of tears. "Give over, child, give over," she whispered, "he'll hear you."

The other lad looked on for a while in silence, and then went up to Dick and said, "Never mind, Dicky dear, father's gone out now."

"I hate him, I hate him," sobbed Dick; while Mrs. Withers vainly tried to quiet him, and I gazed at the scene in silent horror. It was all unspeakably dreadful to me. I had never seen a blow given to a child in my life, and I fear my young heart echoed the passionate words, "I hate him."

Gradually poor Dick sobbed himself to sleep in Mrs. Withers' arms

Neither James nor I ventured to move or speak ; the room grew darker and drearier every moment, and the silence, broken only by an occasional unconscious sob from the sleeping boy, became dreadfully oppressive to a sensitive, nervous child like me. At last the old woman rose, and bidding us follow her, carried Dick upstairs into a large, meagrely-furnished, carpetless bed-room, undressed him, and placed him, still asleep, in one of two uncurtained beds ; then, telling James to make haste and go to bed, she beckoned me to follow her out of the room. Opening the door of a dismal-looking chamber opposite, in which stood a tall funereal four-post bed, she told me I was to sleep there. This last blow, after so much agitation and distress, was overwhelming. The remembrance of my pretty little white-curtained room in Wales came vividly before me ; I called to mind how carefully my nurse, Jenny, always set open the door of communication, that I might see the cheerful light in my mother's room. The oppressive gloom around me seemed even more unsupportable by the contrast, and I clung as tight as I could to Mrs. Withers, exclaiming, in such terror as I think only nervous children know, "Oh, ma'am, I can't, I can't, indeed—I cannot sleep in this dreadful room."

"God bless the child, how he trembles!" said the old woman, vainly endeavouring to disengage herself from my clinging hands. "There isn't another bed ready in the whole house ; you must sleep here, I tell you."

"I won't ! I can't !" said I, screaming out the words in a perfect agony of desperation and terror.

Mrs. Withers hesitated a few moments, and then, as if struck by a sudden idea, she returned to the room where we had left the two other children, I still clutching fast at her gown, and taking up the sleeping Dick in her arms, she carried him into the dreaded chamber, and laying him down in the hearse-like bed, said : "Look here, you silly child ; Dicky will sleep with you ; he ain't afraid of nothing, he ain't." Then holding the candle to his face, she added, "See if he don't look for all the world like a blessed angel."

Children have generally, I think, but little perception of the beautiful ; but I well remember how completely I felt the truth of her words, and how the sense of them comforted me. Dick's long eyelashes were still glistening with tears, and his cheeks were flushed and heated, but his lips were parted with a happy, tranquil smile, and his bright golden hair seemed to me indeed like the halo round the angel's head in a picture of the Annunciation I remembered in my mother's room at home, which I had loved for its calm sanctity and beauty, though without any perception of its meaning. I felt soothed and tranquillized without knowing why, and allowed Mrs. Withers to undress me and lay me by his side, without attempting any further resistance.

I cannot tell how James liked the loneliness in which he was left, for Mrs. Withers took no heed of him, and my own terrors had absorbed me so entirely that I had forgotten his existence. I could not sufficiently compose myself to repeat the simple prayers my mother had taught me, but I felt dreadfully wicked for the omission, and went to sleep with the burden of this, to me, terrible crime, added to the load of misery and unhappiness which was already sufficiently heavy on my young heart. Perhaps I should have felt it even more, had I known then how little chance there was of my resuming the habit.

I have dwelt thus long upon the small incidents of my first day at X Court, partly because even at this distance of time every word and look that passed on that, to me, ever memorable day, are as vividly impressed upon my memory as if they had been photographed on my brain, and partly because, when I look back upon the dreary years that immediately succeeded, it stands forth in my recollection as a sort of typical day, alike representing the trials of that period of my life, and shadowing forth the deeper sorrows of the future.

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## CHAPTER II.

"I never married—but I think I know  
That sons should not be educated so."—BYRON.

THE next morning I was awakened by hearing Dick moving about the room. I shall never forget the dismal wretchedness of that waking. Startled when I first opened my eyes upon the dark curtains and hangings of the bed, it was some moments before I clearly understood where I was ; and when the sad events of the past week recurred to me one by one, a sense of hopelessness and oppression came over me, such as I hope few children have ever known. It seemed to weigh me down, and I made no effort to rise, until Dick, who was already half-dressed, called out to me that I had better make haste, or I should "catch it." I had no distinct idea of what he meant by "catching it," but I saw plainly enough that it was a threat of evil, and I slowly and awkwardly attempted, for the first time in my life, to put on my own clothes.

While I was thus engaged, my eyes fell upon the portrait of a lady which hung over the fire-place. The brilliant eyes and bright golden hair reminded me immediately of Dick ; but the hopeless, sullen, and resentful expression puzzled me. When I looked at his bright, cloudless, generous face, I doubted whether my first idea that the portrait resembled him, was correct. I was nevertheless so attracted by the picture, that I could scarcely remove my eyes from it, and after looking from it to Dick and turning to it again for the hundredth time, I at last took courage to ask him : "Who is that ?"

The question was answered by James, who came in at that moment to call us to breakfast. "That is mother," said he, and then I fancied the picture also resembled him.

"Where is she now?" said I.

"She is dead," he answered; "come to breakfast."

"She didn't die, she ran away," said Dick.

"Ran away!" said I, in astonishment: "why did she run away? Who frightened her?"

"She is dead," repeated James, solemnly; "father said so."

"It's a lie," said Dick, doggedly. "I mean to run away, too, when I'm a big boy," he whispered to me, "and then I'll go and be a soldier."

In the breakfast-room I saw my uncle's partner, Mr. Earle. He was standing at the window with a bundle of letters and papers in his hand; a tall, handsome man, far superior to Mr. Prescott in manner and appearance; young as I was I felt the difference at once. He smiled at me, and held out his hand. What was it that made me shrink away from his smile? He was very like the portrait of his sister which had fascinated me so much; but there was a something in his look that I feared and disliked.

He took no notice of my reluctance to approach him, and seated himself at the breakfast-table opposite Mr. Prescott, without speaking. My uncle read the newspaper during the whole meal, and appeared unconscious of our presence. Mr. Earle occasionally looked from one to another, as he broke the seals of his letters, but did not take the trouble to address us. James, who sat silently eating his breakfast by his father's side, appeared like his image cut out in little. Dick drew figures upon the table-cloth, and rolled up the crumb of his bread into little balls.

There was no want of anything at the breakfast-table except cleanliness; but the air of disorder and neglect around me, so different to the neatness and precision to which I had been accustomed, took away my appetite. No one presided; but each rose in turn, and helped himself to a cup of tea, or a slice of cold meat, without either inviting or appearing to remember the presence of the others. I had never cut a slice of meat, nor poured out a cup of tea in my life; no one offered me anything, and as I had no courage to ask, I sat mournfully looking at the tablecloth until Mr. Earle abruptly asked me if I meant to starve myself, adding, that if I wanted my breakfast, I had better make haste, as it was time to go to school. Upon this I rose, and contrived, awkwardly enough, to pour out a cup of tea. I spilled a great deal upon the tablecloth in my confusion; but that did not add much to the unwholesomeness of its appearance, for it was much stained and very dirty already. I whispered to Dick, who was playing with the knife, to cut me a piece of bread, whereupon he presented me with a huge misshapen piece of crust, which took away the

little appetite I had, and before I had gathered courage to attack it, my uncle rang the bell, and Mrs. Withers appeared to carry away the tray. She came into the room with her broom in her hand, and, indeed, I afterwards observed that she was seldom to be seen without it, though I am not aware that she ever used it to the end for which brooms are supposed to have been created.

There was no change in her appearance, unless it may be that her cap was a little more awry, and suggested the idea that she had been to bed in it. She asked me, rather sharply, why I did not eat my breakfast. My uncle looked up from his newspaper, and said, "The child is dainty, I suppose ; but he'll soon get the better of that here." The ever-ready tears began to roll down my cheeks at this, and the two boys stared at me in astonishment. Happening to look up at that moment, I saw that Mr. Earle was laughing at me ; pride came to my aid, and, gulping down my grief by a strong effort, I said I was not hungry, and walked to the window to hide my confusion.

The two lads now ran for their hats and books, in order to start for school, and my uncle, putting a letter to the schoolmaster into my hand, desired me to follow them. Hereupon Mrs. Withers put my cap on my head so as effectually to cover my eyes, which I have observed older people generally do when they put children's hats on for them. She cautioned my cousins not to walk too fast for me, and slipped a slice of bread and butter into my hand for me to eat as I went along.

At first I felt too dejected to eat ; but Dick, who was two years older than I, and very strong for his age, took hold of my arm to help me down stairs with so much gentleness that I felt quite consoled, and before we reached the school-door, my bread and butter were consumed.

As we went in Dick whispered to me : " If any of the boys bully you, you just tell me, that's all." And to do him justice he certainly fought all my battles for me like a young lion, and soon taught all the lads to respect my infirmity. Poor Dick ! even then, there was something of the knight-errant about him ; he was nobler, juster, and more generous than the rest of us.

It is useless to describe our school. I suppose it was much like other day-schools, but we had the good fortune to have a kind and clever teacher, who possessed the art of interesting us in our lessons, and I think we learned more, and with less reluctance, than most boys, and, possibly because we had no happy home to contrast it with, we did not dislike school. I had long learned to find pleasure in books. James plodded on patiently, because it was his nature to be patient and industrious, and Dick was so clever that the usher took a pride in bringing him forward. On the whole, though we worked hard, we were certainly far happier at school than at home. When we went home in the evening, there was no one to meet us, or to

inquire into our progress. We let ourselves in with a latch-key, and I really believe we learned our lessons because there was nothing else to do. When Mrs. Withers was ready with our supper, she used to lean over the banisters with the eternal broom in her hand, and call to us to go upstairs into the kitchen, where the meal was prepared and spread out in a disorderly manner, upon a table without a cloth. Supper over, the old woman always drove us downstairs again, because our noise gave her the fidgets, as she said ; but, in reality, I think, because our presence interfered with the enjoyment of the contents of a certain teapot, which used to be brought down from a shelf upon our departure, the smell of which suggested no thoughts of the herb that cheers but not inebriates. During the interval between supper and bed-time, we used generally to wander listlessly about the house ; for we had nothing to do, nothing to play with, and nothing to read. Sometimes, however, the desire of physical activity natural to youth would induce us to attempt some boyish game ; but the consequences were almost always disastrous, for we were certain to make too much noise, and disturb Mr. Prescott, who, emerging from the doorway in the panelling that had so alarmed me on the first day of my arrival, invariably began by accusing Dick of all the disturbance. Dick as invariably made some insolent retort ; whereupon my uncle would rush upon him, cane in hand, and belabour him with a fury and passion I cannot think of even now without a shudder.

Dick, struggling, kicking, and biting in self-defence, became every day more nearly a match for Mr. Prescott, and the consequence was, that, exasperated by the resistance offered him, he was often carried away to display a violence perfectly unwarrantable. James and I, only too well used to such scenes, stood by without daring to utter a word, until the noise of the unequal combat reached Mrs. Withers' ears, when she would descend into the office and call Mr. Earle, whose mere appearance was generally sufficient to make my uncle throw the lad from him, and return to his own room. Whenever his exasperation was too great to allow him to notice the interruption, Earle would say, in his peculiar, sneering tone, " Heyday, Prescott ! is this the way you show your fatherly tenderness for your *eldest son* !" At this my uncle would turn round upon him with a volley of oaths and abuse, during the utterance of which poor Dick would escape from his clutches and run upstairs into the bedroom. There, flinging himself upon the funereal four-poster, he would give vent to the sobs and tears his pride had restrained before. I used generally to limp after him as soon as my uncle's back was turned, and sit mournfully on the foot of the bed till the first violence of Dick's passion had subsided, when we would throw our arms round each other's necks and cry together, and Dick would often look up at his mother's portrait with streaming eyes, and say, " I'll run away, too ; I will, I will."

"But, Dick," said I one night, when after a peculiarly fierce contest we had wept ourselves into a sort of composure ; "why did your mother run away and leave you here to be beaten ? I don't think she could have loved you much, do you ?"

"Oh yes she did, though," said Dick. "I know she must have loved me, because she used to kiss me and cry over me at night. I don't know why she ran away though. Perhaps," he added in a low whisper, "perhaps father beat her too."

"But why does James say she is dead ?" I asked.

"Oh, he always says what father tells him to say," said Dick, with something of contempt in his tone ; "but I know she's not dead ; for when people are dead they lie in the house several days, and then they are taken away and buried in the daytime. Now mother went away in the night, and she had her bonnet on."

"Oh, do tell me all about it, Dick !" said I, eagerly.

"It's a very long while ago now," said Dick, "and I don't remember much about it ; but I do recollect how she came into my room, and stooped over the bed, and kissed me, and said, 'Poor boy, poor boy, forgive your poor mother.' But then she had often said that before, and I don't know that I should have remembered it so well that night, if she hadn't had her bonnet on. And I cried too, and kissed her, and then I went to sleep, and the next morning mother wasn't here. Then father and uncle Earle quarrelled so that I thought they were going to fight, and I hoped uncle Earle would thrash father, but he didn't. I remember old Withers cried all the morning, and there was no breakfast. When I asked where mother was, they said I was not to speak of her any more : and some time afterwards they all said she was dead."

That was all poor Dick had to tell.

What I have now said of our way of life at X Court may stand to describe its general course during the eight or nine first years of my residence there. I recollect no change of importance during that period, and in looking back over all those long dreary years, I can recall no glimpse of any silver lining to the perpetual cloud of gloom that hung over that strange household. Dick, it is true, became too strong for my uncle to cane, and as soon as he felt himself secure for the future, I really believe ceased to feel any ill-will for the past ; though he had certainly but little affection for one whose bearing to him had only changed from violence to indifference.

James grew more awkward and reserved, and though we never quarrelled, there was little intercourse or sympathy between us. All my affection was concentrated on Dick. Mrs. Withers grew gradually older, dirtier, and crosser ; yet no one was ever hired to help her. Of course she must have renewed her garments on some occasions during all the years we lived at X Court, but I cannot remember ever to have seen the slightest change in her ; and if such a thing

were possible, I should be tempted to say she always wore the identical black cap, wiped the furniture with the identical apron, and progressed about the house with the identical, inoperative broom that she displayed to my alarmed vision when Mr. Slack first handed me over to her care. The house grew to look more neglected and decayed year by year ; but no one ever spoke of painting it, and I had become so accustomed to its dinginess that I had quite lost the desire for cleanliness which tormented me when I first left our prim cottage in Wales. We lads continued to tread the same mill-horse round ; going to school on week days, and—with a few bright exceptions of which I shall presently speak—wandering about the house, or looking out of the dirty windows into the grass-grown court, on the seventh. Nobody ever suggested that we should go to church ; though I dare say we should have been willing enough to try it, for a change, had the idea occurred to us. As a rule, we only saw my uncle and Mr. Earle at breakfast. They each of them became daily more taciturn with us, and more absorbed in business, and when office hours were over, each of them retired to his private room without making any inquiry into our proceedings. I can only attribute our unmurmuring acceptance of a life so unnatural to boys of our age, to the force of habit. We had never experienced anything better, and it did not occur to us, I think, that it would be possible to obtain it.

The gleam of sunlight that pierces the cloud-shadows that overhang my remembrance of this period of our life, is the recollection of certain Sunday excursions to Hampstead Heath or Highgate Wood. My uncle occasionally bestowed a few shillings upon us as pocket-money, and we used to meet in council on these rare occasions, in order to decide how to spend it.

In the winter we generally bought cigars, which we smoked with contraband delight, in one of the empty rooms at the top of the house ; but in the summer, James and Dick used to accompany me to the Blue Posts Inn, Holborn, and deposit me safely in the Hampstead coach. They always performed the journey on foot. I could limp from the coach office at Hampstead, to the place of rendezvous on the heath, by myself. Our favourite spot was under a beautiful group of fir trees, from which there was a most lovely view over Harrow, and beyond. I know not if the fir trees are standing now. Perhaps if I were to revisit the spot I should see little beauty in it ; but in my recollection it appears still an Eden of loveliness and glory. Under the fir trees I used to lie and wait, looking up in dreamy ecstasy at the blue sky shining through their branches, until James and Dick arrived.

I often wonder now that we were never tempted to join in the sports of other boys on the heath ; but I suppose our way of life had made us unsociable. Even with our schoolfellows we were never

intimate : we were not allowed to visit any of them, or invite them home, and I think we had all of us an unconfessed sense that our home was a thing to be concealed ; that we had a life apart, and that it behoved us to be retired. Perhaps, while we were very young, we were influenced by Mrs. Withers' invariable parting words as she despatched us, "When you're done school, lads, you'll come straight home ; and mind and keep yourselves to yourselves while you're there."

We used each of us to take a favourite book with us, but I don't think we ever read much ; and although, as I have said, it never occurred to us to make any exertion to change our actual way of life, yet our talk on these occasions was always of the great changes to take place in the future. James had but little to say ; he always professed himself content to follow his father's profession. As for me, my career was at first undecided ; but as I grew older, it became understood between us, on the strength of the wretched verses in which I was wont to vent that yearning after happiness which the young so often mistake for an aspiration after higher things, that I was to be a great poet. Dick, tall, strong, handsome Dick, what could he be but a distinguished general, whose chief mission, as it presented itself to us in our day-dreams, appeared to be that of miraculously relieving besieged towns, scattering to the winds an enemy three times his superior in force, and saving the life and honour of some lovely and oppressed princess ?

But the short and rare delights of these excursions were almost too bitterly paid for by the contrast they afforded to the oppressive atmosphere that seemed to pervade X Court. How I envied Dick and James the return on foot ! At least they were longer in reaching home ; they could pull the hedgerows by the way and breathe the fresh air of liberty to the last. How dark and dismal everything looked when I got home ! how *erie* I felt as I stumbled up the unlighted staircase, and leaned upon my crutch while I fumbled for the key-hole. How ghostly the lofty hall looked as I entered it unwelcomed, lighted my own candle, and limped up the creaking stairs to old Withers for company. The kitchen had at least the fire-light to cheer me, though the old woman herself was generally asleep in her chair, and often very cross at being disturbed. But I always stayed there till I heard the two others return. Dick's cheery voice would have scared the most pertinacious ghosts, and my nervous and sickly fancies never troubled me while I was with him.

I cannot explain how it was that we always came straight home—how it happened that we never fell into vice. What saved us ? God knows we should have been little to blame had we sought any means of escape from such a desolate existence. Yet, neglected and abandoned to ourselves as we were, at an age when the mere tumult of the blood leads many a well-guarded youth astray, our lives were

as pure as the life of any maiden in England beneath her father's roof.  
I can only attribute it to the force of habit.

### CHAPTER III.

" . . . . . We, poor unfledg'd,  
Have never wing'd from view of the nest ; we know not  
What air's from home . . . . .  
. . . . . but unto us it is  
A cell of ignorance."—SHAKSPEARE.

TIME dragged on, however, even in X Court, and when Dick was nineteen, our schoolmaster, who had long before withdrawn him from the ordinary school-boy routine, and given him private lessons, wrote a letter to Mr. Prescott, in which he informed him that his eldest son was both too old and too well-informed for his establishment, and earnestly recommended that he should be sent to college. Dick accordingly left school, but my uncle appeared quite undecided what to do with him, and he was left to idle about the house or streets as he chose for two long years, during which he studied military works as well as he could alone. He repeatedly urged my uncle to buy him a commission, but never got more than an impatient *pish* in reply. James and I left school shortly after Dick, and James at once entered his father's office as a salaried clerk. During the period of enforced idleness that ensued upon his first leaving school, Dick had made a discovery which proved a source of great delight both to him and me.

One of the rooms at the top of the house had always been kept locked, and we boys had been very curious to know what it contained. Dick contrived to worm out of Mrs. Withers the secret that it contained his grandfather's library, which had been sent to Mrs. Prescott after her father's death. Mrs. Withers knew nothing of the key, but Dick burst open the door with a vigorous kick, and entered upon a field of enjoyment so new to him, as to make him for the time forget even his aspirations after a military career. His pleasure was equalled, perhaps surpassed, by mine. The books were of every description, from the best standard authors, down to a mass of French novels very unfit for any lad's reading ; but we devoured them all, and perhaps the antidotes were as powerful as the poisons among them. For a time we were transported into an unreal world of delight, which rendered us indifferent to the troubles of our actual everyday existence ; but when this resource was exhausted, that everyday existence became intolerable to us. We were eaten up with ennui, and even habit could no longer reconcile us to a life, the joyless uselessness of which we now fully understood.

One evening, after a good deal of gloomy talk over our position,

Dick had thrown himself upon the horse-hair sofa, on the arm of which he had been playing at horses when I first saw him, and fallen fast asleep. James came upstairs from the office and seated himself wearily at the table, leaning his head upon a hand begrimed with ink and dust. The contrast between the two brothers had never struck me so forcibly before. From the night when Mrs. Withers first compared him to a "blessed angel," the sense of Dick's personal comeliness had never left me; and as I looked at his bright golden hair, refined features, and strong yet elegant frame, I could not help exclaiming: "How unlike you two are!"

"Yes, indeed," said James, sadly, looking at the sleeper; "Dick is very handsome, and I am very ugly; I know that. But what does it matter? I am to be a lawyer, you know, and what would be the good of having such a figure as Dick, when I've got to sit all my life scribbling downstairs in the office?"

"But don't you like to be a lawyer, James?" said I.

"What does it matter whether I like it or not, when it's got to be?" answered he; "besides, I dare say I shall like it when I'm one of the firm, and earn money myself. Father says I shall."

He sighed, and as I looked at his pale, weary, patient face, I felt a sudden increase of sympathy for him.

"What's the good of slaving and striving for money which nobody spends?" said I. "What's the good of being rich and living here as we do? Look at Mr. Earle; old Withers says he is a great deal richer than uncle, and what good does his money do to him or to anybody else? Oh, James, why don't we all make an effort to get out of this dreadful house?"

James looked up at me surprised, for I spoke with a passion unaccountable to him.

"It is dull," he said, after a pause.

"Dull," cried I, "duller than the grave; day after day, night after night, always the same. Nothing to do, but to read books one knows by heart; nothing to see but this odious, melancholy court; no one to speak to but Withers who can't understand one, my uncle who never answers, and Mr. Earle who sneers at everything."

The energy with which I spoke had awokened Dick, and he had heard nearly all that we had said. He now joined in, saying: "It's all true; it's all true; let's run away; any life must be better than living here. I should have run away long ago if it had not been for leaving Ned, but you and I would take care of him."

"Do, James, do," cried I, too excited at the idea of liberty to remember my own helplessness.

James shook his head, sadly. "If you two want to run away—and I'm sure I don't wonder at it—I won't peach, and I'll give you all the money I've got to help your start; but it wouldn't do for me to leave father."

"Pooh!" said Dick; "who cares for father?"

"That's just it," said James, lowering his voice, "nobody cares for father. He says himself that if he don't soon have a son in the business to take his part, Uncle Earle will bully him out of it. Why, all the clerks see how Earle bullies him, and that he hasn't spirit to stand up against it. There must be somebody to stand up against Earle, and when once I'm a partner, he won't bully me."

Dick and I looked at one another in astonishment. We both saw James for the first time in a perfectly new light. He spoke very low, and in his usual cold and awkward manner; but somehow we both felt that, as he said, Mr. Earle would not bully him.

"Well," said Dick, after a pause, "perhaps you are right, but that has nothing to do with Ned and me. We are no use to anybody here, and so we'll run away to-morrow night."

But my excitement had subsided, and much as I longed for freedom, I could not but reflect, that though Dick might battle successfully with the world alone, even he could not make his way with a clog like me at his heels, and I said so. At first Dick protested against leaving me behind in that dungeon; but as James strongly agreed with me, it was at last settled between us that Dick was to run away on the following Sunday night, and go for a soldier or a sailor as the case might be; that he was to make his fortune—of this I think none of us entertained a shadow of doubt—and then return to fetch me to share his wealth and honours with him. James, in the meantime, was to become a partner, and achieve such success in business as would enable him to buy off Earle and free his father and himself from the incubus of his presence.

I cannot tell why we all so cordially hated Earle. James, it is true, had had reason since he had entered the office to dislike him, but I cannot remember that he had ever been really unkind to any of us lads; yet even Dick, for whom he had so frequently interfered to save when a child from his father's violence, disliked him far more than he did his oppressor. I had been instinctively repelled by Earle's appearance and supercilious, sneering manner, when I first saw him; and the impression had deepened rather than diminished with years. I am inclined to think children are generally in the right in such matters, and I own I am always indisposed towards a man from whom I observe children shrink away.

Now that James's unexpected confidence had called forth our own, Dick and I continued to speak freely to him of our hopes and plans for the future; and it was, I think, chiefly owing to his superior prudence, that Dick did not start that very night. God knows how often I have thought of this since, and wished he had!

James, however, persuaded us to postpone the execution of our project till the following Sunday. Our united stock of pocket money only amounted to five shillings and twopence; and even with our

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exalted notions of Dick's capacity, this appeared a small sum to begin the world withal. On the Saturday night James would receive his week's salary, and a guinea would be an important addition to Dick's little store. It would have appeared quite natural to all of us that he should take James's money, had it been a hundred times as much. Was he not going to make his fortune for the happiness, glory, and benefit of us all?

No doubt most London lads of the present day would smile with superior pity at our limited notions; but it must be remembered that we had never had any opportunity of acquiring the expensive tastes upon which they doubtless pride themselves; that our knowledge of the world was limited to the little we had gained from the old squire's library, and that certainly none of the heroes in whom we had so rapturous and implicit a faith, could have presented a more gallant and heroic exterior than our poor Dick. Though little more than twenty-one, he looked far older; his frame, though elegant, was muscular; and notwithstanding his habitual gentleness of manner—possibly acquired from his long habit of protecting and assisting my infirmity—when roused he was full of fire and spirit. The thought of losing him was dreadful to me, but I struggled to conceal my unhappiness; I knew that a word of lamentation at my loneliness would suffice to make him give up all idea of leaving me; but I was so firmly convinced of the brilliant future in store for him, that I kept silence as a duty. It was long before I could compose myself to sleep—my dreams were full of wild adventures and impossible escapes, in which Dick was invariably the prominent figure; and I awoke before daybreak unrested, but unable to sleep again.

I arose at least an hour earlier than usual, leaving the unconscious hero of my nocturnal romances still asleep. Mrs. Withers was lighting the sitting-room fire when I went in, which was, I think, the utmost she ever did towards rendering the room habitable. Notwithstanding the tenacity with which she clung to the eternal broom, I have no recollection of ever seeing her dust or sweep. I know she tried occasionally to wipe the mantelpiece or the table with the apron that so frequently had dried our childish tears, but I do not remember that the furniture ever looked any the brighter for the performance of that little ceremony.

I seated myself listlessly on the rug, and began coaxing the fire into a blaze; during which occupation I fell into a daydream, from which I was roused by hearing the postman's knock. Presently, Mrs. Withers entered with the morning's letters. It was her custom to place my uncle's letters by the side of his teacup at one end of the table, and Mr. Earle's in a similar position at the other end. I had never taken any interest in the distribution of the letters. I knew well enough there could be none for me; but I did notice on this occasion a large foreign letter with a black seal, which she placed by

the side of my uncle's cup. I was about to look at the address when my attention was attracted by a noise in the court below, and I went to the window to see what was the matter. The windows of the sitting-room stood in deep recesses, with old-fashioned window seats : they were draped with heavy red curtains, and as I knelt on the corner of the window seat farthest from the door, I must have been completely hidden by the curtain from anyone entering the sitting-room. Certainly, Mr. Earle, who came in at that moment, could have had no idea of my presence, for he went to examine the bundle of letters placed by my uncle's cup, with the air of one performing a customary act, and even before he looked at his own. I saw him change colour at the sight of the letter with the black seal, hastily put it in his pocket, and leave the room.

I was confounded. It was evidently his intention to read his partner's letter and conceal its arrival. I determined at first that I would tell my uncle what I had seen : then certain cowardly misgivings as to the impolicy of making Mr. Earle my enemy, just when my champion and protector was about to leave the house, caused me to hesitate. I pondered uneasily upon the subject without coming to a decision, until my uncle and Mr. Earle both entered the room, and at the same moment Mrs. Withers brought in the breakfast.

My uncle and Mr. Earle seated themselves in their accustomed places, and began opening their letters as usual ; but I noticed that Earle's hand trembled so violently that he could scarcely raise his cup to his mouth, and that he was very pale. There was nothing, however, so striking in his agitation as to have attracted my attention had it not already been drawn towards him by what had passed ; and he was soon able to master his emotion, of whatever description it may have been.

My uncle—after glancing in a listless, indifferent manner at the few insignificant letters that lay by his cup—took up his newspaper, as usual. I had certainly no love for him. He had never shown me any tenderness : still he had never been unkind to me ; and my heart was softened towards him by the recollection of James's confidence of the night before. By a sudden resolution I took courage, and, leaving my station behind the curtain, I went up to my uncle and said—

"There was another letter for you, uncle ; a foreign letter!"

I did not dare to look at Mr. Earle ; but I knew that he started.

"A foreign letter, Ned ! " said my uncle. "Where is it ? "

I felt Earle's eye upon me, and my courage failed ; so I pretended to look about on the table for the letter, saying—

"Yes, a foreign letter ; and it had a black seal."

"Oh ! " said Mr. Earle, laughing ; "your zeal is more officious than correct, Ned. The letter with a black seal was directed to me, and old Withers placed it by your uncle's cup by mistake."

I was defeated, but not convinced ; and I fancied my uncle appeared

uneasy. He said nothing, however; and took up his newspaper again with an angry frown.

"By the way, Prescott," said Mr. Earle, after a pause, "an old friend of mine has just died in Italy and has left his daughter to my care. The girl may arrive any day, for I fear she has already started. I must tell Withers," he added, ringing the bell, "to get my late sister's room ready."

"A girl!" said Prescott, angrily; "she can't come here, Stephen. What in the world should we do with a girl in this hole; an Italian, too; very likely a Catholic? Why, we should have the house full of prying priests! And I won't have that room used," he added; "it has been shut up, you know, ever since—Really, Earle, I can't imagine how you can propose such an arrangement."

"The arrangement is none of my making," said his partner, coolly. "I know any girl would be a bore here, and I do not, certainly, intend her to stay. I shall write at once to prevent her coming at all, if possible; but if she has already started, she will come straight here, and *must* therefore remain till I can make some fresh arrangement. As to the room," he continued, purposely mistaking my uncle's meaning, "it will do well enough when Withers has brushed it up a little. Why should not the girl be quite as happy there as my sister was?"

This last question was asked with a sneering laugh. I could see that my uncle winced under it, and hear him mutter an oath between his teeth: but he took up his newspaper again, saying, "Of course, you will have your own way about it, as you do about everything else; but I tell you, you must be mad to think about bringing a young girl here among all these lads, and—"

He stopped short as Dick and James came in to breakfast, followed by Mrs. Withers, looking especially surly at having been rung for out of the accustomed routine.

My uncle's last remark seemed to make some impression upon Mr. Earle, for he looked uneasily at Dick; and then, turning to Mrs. Withers, said, "Nothing now, Betty, I'll come and speak to you presently, upstairs." Then assuming a jocose air, he said, still addressing Mrs. Withers, but I fancied, with a side glance at me, "I must buy you a new pair of spectacles, old lady; you made a mistake this morning, and put one of my letters on Mr. Prescott's side of the table."

"Neither you nor me ain't so young as we was, Mr. Stephen," said the old woman. "I puts the letters according to who the postman says they're for; and as to mistakes," she added, leaning upon her broom, and nodding her head with a defiant air, "there's many a mistake has been made amongst us, worse luck, and will be again, most like."

Hereupon she left the room, muttering discontentedly to herself, and Earle, suddenly turning to Dick, as if anxious to change the subject, said,

"Dick, my man, I have been thinking it's time you should be doing something. We must make a soldier of you now, you know. What think you of a commission in the —th Light Dragoons?"

The thing was so unexpected that, at first, Dick had not a word to say. A short pause ensued, during which I felt that Earle was looking at me, and I wondered whether he knew that I attributed this eagerness to despatch Dick, to the fact of the expected arrival of the Italian girl. At length Dick turned to my uncle and said,

"If you really mean this, father, I am very much obliged to you."

"I have nothing to do with it," said Mr. Prescott, coldly. "Your uncle Earle arranges everything in this house. Come, James," he added, pushing away his plate, and rising, "it is time for us to be in the office."

"Then I must thank you for this, uncle," said Dick, turning to Earle, who immediately engaged him in conversation as to his future prospects, and spoke to him of the necessity of his leaving home immediately, as if all the previous delays had been of the poor lad's own making. The whole thing seemed to me very strange. I had never seen Earle so amiable, nor heard him speak so lightly of money before. Ignorant as I was, I knew Dick could not obtain a commission in such a regiment for nothing.

I sat lost in thought, pondering over all these things, while Dick unsuspicuously conversed with his uncle Earle over the arrangements to be made for his departure from home.

Then my mind reverted to the letter. How I wished I had looked at the direction! Perhaps I was wrong in my suspicions. I would speak to Withers on the subject. But over all these ideas and determinations hung the image which I had conjured up in my own mind of Mr. Earle's mysterious ward. I had not a moment's doubt that she was very beautiful, with the lustrous black eyes and hair, and the pale olive skin which *il lungo studio e il grande amore* of Mrs. Radcliffe's works had taught me to regard as the distinguishing characteristic of Italian birth, and fixed in my mind as the invariable type of Italian beauty.

I was roused from my reflections by Mr. Earle, who rose from his seat, took up his bundle of letters, and said to me,

"Now that Dick's disposed of, we must look out for something for you, Ned."

He put his hand on my shoulder as he spoke, but I instinctively shrank away from his touch. He looked at me for a moment with a half-pitying, half-contemptuous smile; then turned on his heel and left the room. I heard him go upstairs and I knew he was going to tell Mrs. Withers to get my aunt's room ready for the expected guest.

No sooner was I alone with Dick, than I eagerly related to him the great news I had heard, expecting him to be as excited as I was at

the thoughts of the Italian beauty. But, alas! Dick was no longer the same ; his head was full of his commission, the life in barracks, uniforms, glory, and, above all, that magical word, liberty. Already he seemed to feel himself his own master—a free man ; and I could not make him share the excitement I felt at the idea of the possible arrival of Mr. Earle's foreign ward.

Finding him so insensible upon that subject, I went so far as to tell him of my suspicions about the letter with the black seal ; but he was disposed to see everything *couleur de rose* that day, and to be in full charity even with Mr. Earle. He only laughed at me, and said that it was quite evident Mrs. Withers had made a mistake. But the more certain he appeared of the contrary, the more my own suspicions that Earle had deceived my uncle deepened ; the arguments which failed to convince him, completely convinced me, and at the end of our discussion I believe I could have gone to the scaffold for the truth of what had been at first a mere uneasy suspicion.

Dick soon after went out to walk off his excitement, and I instantly betook myself to the kitchen to seek Mrs. Withers. She was not there, but I found her engaged in opening the shutters of my aunt's bed-room. I had never before seen the door of this room unlocked, and I entered it with a sensation of awe, which was rather increased than diminished by a certain musty smell, which told plainly of long neglect. When the shutters were unclosed, and the sunlight let in upon the sad-coloured curtains and bed-hangings, which were covered with cobwebs and dust, I ventured to say to Withers, who had taken no notice of my entrance,

"It seems rather gloomy for a young lady, don't it?"

"It seemed gloomy enough to *my* young lady twenty years ago," said she, "but it's good enough for any foreign miss likely to come amongst us, I should think. I've a good mind to take the squire down," she continued, looking up regretfully at a portrait which hung up over the mantel-piece ; "he wouldn't have liked to see no stuck-up, foreign girls in Mary's room, he wouldn't."

The old woman took hold of the picture with the intention of taking it down ; but, finding it too heavy for her, she shook her head, saying, "Never mind, it don't much matter ; there's many a thing he wouldn't have liked goes on in this house, worse luck."

I looked with great interest at the squire's portrait, in which I could trace a strong resemblance to Dick, but, as in the portrait of his daughter, there was in it a certain look of haughty wilfulness, which I did not like.

"I think Dick's is a far pleasanter face than this, Mrs. Withers," said I.

"Ah, poor Dick," said she, "he'll never do no harm to nobody but hisself, he won't. So they're going to get rid of him now, and he thinks it's a mighty fine thing to go for a soldier, he does, and per-

haps he's right enough, for there ain't nobody to cry after him when he's shot, worse luck."

Seeing that Mrs. Withers appeared to me more irritable, and, therefore, more talkative than usual, I determined to hazard a question about the letter, and said,

"How came you to make such a mistake with Mr. Earle's letter, Withers?"

"If nobody never made no worser mistakes than that," said the old woman, turning sharply round on me with suspended broom, "there's some folks as would be better off, there is,—there!"

This sibylline utterance was all I could extract from her on the subject. She went on slowly wiping the 'dingy furniture with the dingier apron, and all my often-repeated questions obtained no other reply than, "There, there! don't bother, lad, don't bother; can't you see I'm bothered enough already!"

*(To be continued.)*

## LOVE'S QUEST.

(FOR A MURAL PAINTING.)

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WHENAS the watches of the night had grown  
To that deep loneliness where dreams begin,  
I saw how Love, with visage worn and thin,  
With wings close-bound, went through a town alone.  
Death-pale he showed, and only seemed to moan  
With sore desire some dolorous place to win;  
Sharp brambles passed had streaked his dazzling skin,  
His bright feet eke were gashed with many a stone.

And, as he went, I, sad for piteousness,  
Might see how men from door and gate would move  
To stay his steps; or womankind would press,  
With wistful eyes, to baleonies above,  
And bid him enter in. But Love not less,  
Mournful, kept on his way. Ah, hapless Love!

AUSTIN DOBSON.

## A FOG ON THE THAMES.

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JUST now a growing fog has gathered on the river; not thick enough—at any rate, as yet—to stop the traffic, but giving so weird a look to everything which it invests as to be worth a note or two.

It is a June, not a November, fog. The subtropical plants in Battersea Park seem quite at home in the sultry haze; but the lilacs and the laburnums and the hawthorns and the chestnuts, white and red, and the ribbon flower-borders look strangely dim, while again the rich, moist grass, seen close at hand, shines as if giving off its own light. A stray park-keeper with dimmed gilt band and buttons, one or two solitaires dreaming on the clammy garden-seats, a stray gardener who looks up from his work and silently gazes at a passer-by with cowlike eyes, a lounging waiter yawning in the midst of a jumble of empty benches and tables, and two or three little children dodging in and out between them like mice, are the only people one meets in the whole of the damp, gauze-muffled park. Leaden and smooth and indistinct, with blurred-green reflections, spreads the ornamental water, like a lagoon in which yellow fever and a Cuban slaver might be hiding. A water-fowl rises with a scurry of wings to alight unseen with a dully audible splash. Two black swans glide about noiselessly, or talking to each other in the voice which is said to be excellent in woman, twisting their long necks to crop the blades of the flowering flags, or lifting their red beaks to the leaves of the overhanging trees.

The lazy ripple of the river on the pebbly strand at the foot of the water-side of the park—so trim in its core, so rough at its edges—suggests a trip upon the water. Let us take boat at the pier hard by.

Old Chelsea Church and the old trees and houses of Cheyne Walk have a *Fata Morgana* look. Two white wager-boats, pulled by white-clad spectres, dart out of the mist ahead, and dart into the mist astern—emblems reversed of life. A train thunders over the railway-bridge, adding a coil of sluggishly curling snowy vapour to the mouse-coloured mist. A black lighter—one long sweep sprawling like a broken fin, the other tugged at, doggedly though seemingly lazily, by the lighterman, whose sulky features are indistinguishable—flounders past like a wounded whale. Tiers of black lighters, as gloomy as if they were meant for Titans' floating hearses, loom alongside the shore's blurred higgledy-piggledy of piles and wharfs and cranes, and “travellers” on gaunt timber skeletons, and coal, and brick and stone, and chimney-pots and drain-pipes. At Nine Elms there is a

maze of curving and crossing rails that look like half-obliterated fork-scratches on a greasy plate, with stumbling horses straining at lead-coloured and mud-coloured trucks, and men—clad presumably in green corduroy, but looking exactly like chimney-sweeps—shouting huskily to the horses and one another under the supervision of mist-magnified overseers, also leaden-hued. The extinguisher turrets of Millbank Penitentiary perk up, blurred, above the blurred jumble of its dirty-drab brick : the mist gives the place a Bastille look of mystery. The Lambeth Embankment glimpses through the murky air like a long line of pale ghosts drawn up along the banks of Styx ; it is just possible to make out that builders are somewhere at work in the dark jumble of towered masonry formed by Lambeth Palace and Church. As we zigzag from side to side, the mist-bordered reaches of the river look like wide lakes. We run in so close to the Houses of Parliament that, in spite of the mist, we can see the scaled-off look of the stones of that magnificent modern-antique ready-made : to one who has crossed the line, the noses of some of the sculptured figures suggest a memory of the time when the skin peeled off his nose in curly shavings, though from a very different cause. Red and white St. Thomas's Hospital on the other side might serve for a dyspeptically despondent butcher's dream of vanishing raw beef.

When, under graceful Westminster Bridge, the funnel comes down, like a hemlock-stalk half cut in two by stick of idle wanderer practising sword-exercise—most ungenerously making use of its monopolised privilege to smoke abaft itself, by clogging our nostrils and defiling our shirt-fronts with unconsumed carbon—the fog is thickening so that we begin to doubt whether our boat will get beyond Hungerford ; but, just as we have passed Hungerford Bridge,

Apollo's arrow flashes through the murk,  
And flashes back in shattered gold.

The sudden sunbeam gleams but for a few moments, but it has turned the Embankment granite and Somerset House and Waterloo Bridge into shimmering snow, the Embankment Gardens into glistening emerald ; it has lit up church vanes and windows in dusty brick houses, glorified straw-laden barges, even grimy coal-barges—and then it vanishes as suddenly as it came.

As we flap the brown waters into dingy cream on our way to our City wharf, we pass bilious-looking blotches of artificial light in Temple chambers and riverside warehouses : fog in her sober drab livery hath once more all things clad, when our skipper sidles his boat like a shying horse up to the Allhallows Pier.

Through rat-run passages, blocked with barrels and bricklayers, let us make a rush to London Bridge Wharf, and get on board a boat bound down the river.

Some of her passengers are already, so far as mental discernment goes, in keeping with the atmosphere. The proneness of British holiday-makers to get "foggy," with other than aqueous fumes, is a great mystery. They begin to muddle themselves before they start; they keep on muddling themselves whilst they are out, and so do not really see the things which it may be supposed they went forth for to see. They often get so quarrelsome, too, over their "enjoyment." Two of our fellow-passengers, before the moorings are cast off, have already got up their "little difference." They are in joint charge of their party of womankind and children, and one of them wants to be sole acting paymaster, promising to square accounts with his friend when they get ashore again. The other, however, in his own phrase, does not "see that." Perhaps he distrusts his companion's honour,—at any rate, arithmetic. It is plain, at least, that he does not relish the idea of losing such transitory respect as he might get from the stewards by the giving of orders and the disbursement of cash,—of playing in their eyes the part of *Beneficiaire* to his friend's Mr. Bountiful.

"Tain't as if you was goin' to stand Sam," he remarks, in a solemnly aggrieved tone. "I pays my whack, and I'll see to the orderin' on it."

The steam-boat's crew, who, especially the stewardkins, give themselves the airs of ancient mariners, because they sometimes go as far as Sheerness, laugh at the idea of any fog being found "down the river."

It lasts, however, some way down. Off Billingsgate Market, whose red bricks blotch the thick air like a "teething-rash," we pass three plump bowed and (may I say?) buttocked Dutch boats, anchored abreast, varnished, apparently, with "golden syrup," hanging out fish on their rigging (although, the fog considered, the figure is scarcely appropriate) like the drying frocks and trousers of men-of-war's men, and manned by stolid mariners who loom through the mist like stage-smugglers. Plenty of business, no doubt, is being transacted in the grim Custom House, but its lighters, rocking in the steam-boat's wash, make one think of sleepers tossing in a nightmare,—the abnormal darkness is so sleep-suggestive. The lofty Shad Thames warehouses loom unsubstantial as mouldy gingerbread. The Tower looks much as usual: to a "fanciful mind" that always has a haze about it,—an historical haze. Lots of steamers we pass, razor-bowed and apple-bowed, down by the head and down by the stern, with lists to port and with lists to starboard, bowspritless and with little stumps of bowsprits like rather big rolling-pins, with white, black, white and black, and red and black, and piecrust-coloured funnels—single or a brace of them; steamers with white paddle-boxes, and white and gilt and red and blue and yellow and green scrolls and mouldings, and raking scraped spars and "flemished" ropes

—sea-beauties, in spite of their bulging paddle-boxes and ugly screw-gaps astern ; and hideous screw colliers, as filthy and slovenly as the hardest-worked, worst-paid slavery, with squat funnels, like barge-chimneys, sticking up close by the mizen-mast ; steamers crammed with passengers, and sending the bray of brass or the twang of stringed music through the mist ; steamers languidly paddling or screwing their way to their berths, with a few sea-weary people looking over the side ; steamers, with chaotic decks, in the midst of a mob of lighters and wherries ; steamers that do not seem to have even a dog on board ; and consequently snorting little tugs towing trains of barges, with the bargemen and their wives and children clustered about the long tillers. It is like unrolling a long scroll of “panorama”-coloured prints : scarcely any boat is seen in its entirety ; the stern of one and the stem of another are married by the mist. A Thames police galley rows past us. The pullers have a frank, sailor-like look, in spite of the prim letters which show their function ; nevertheless, shooting past in the fog, they make one think of *Fehmgericht* messengers. The masts and yards of the shipping in the docks, seen piecemeal, seem to be floating in the tawny air. The coal-whippers in yonder battered collier look like fiendish phantoms dancing above a bottomless pit, as they swing upon their ropes. The brown sails and trusses of the hay-barges are only distinguishable from the atmosphere as a sepid smudge is from a sepia drawing. The red sheathing of the *Fisgard* and the *Warspite* looks like dying embers. The grey and black of Greenwich Hospital, off which the *Fisgard*, removed from Woolwich, is now moored, can scarcely be made out through the gloom. The men looking over the side of the ship are like a smash of plums. The ship in front of the school is invisible. There is a little more light in the air when we pass Charlton. One of the *Warspite* boys can be seen almost distinctly, standing like a sucking Nelson or Captain Cook—a little chap whose face it is a pleasure to look at—with his foot on the cat-head,—a miniature man-of-war’s man, who seems to sympathise with Admiral Rous’s contempt for the “kettle,” as our representative of it—crack saloon-boat though she be—churns her swift way past him. The light is getting still stronger. The flabby cabbage-like green of that anchored ship can be seen far more plainly than we could make out the dull red of the floating powder-magazine we passed some time ago. “A stern chase is a long chase,” remarks, with most intensely nautical know-ingness, a fellow-passenger (who looks as if he had never been afloat before) as we shoot past a fussy screw, that is sending the water flying as if she were trundling a steam mop. “Something the matter with her engines,” he informs his friend. “Ah, that old *Warspite* ! They’ll never send her to sea again, I suppose ; but, take my word for it, she’d stand a deal more knocking about than your newfangled ships, for all their armour plates. She looks like a

man-of-war, she do. Yes ; two pint bottles of stout," he adds, to the peripatetic steward-tout, "and we'll drink to the naval glories of old England ; for Britons never, never, never shall be slaves." The band-collector comes round with his decanter-slide, and our nautical fellow-passenger, in his character of generous "never, never, never," etc., rattles all his loose (copper) change into it. Then he rushes off and speaks to the grinning master of the boat. " You don't know nothing about that ship with her tawgallon—somethin' or other—sent down. But I'll tell you," he good-naturedly assures his friend, when he comes back. " She's goin' out for seals—that's what she is. Ah, they don't send shrimps o' ships to Australia, like that, now-a-days." The last remark, apparently, is made *à propos* of nothing,—unless it be of a battered Sunderland brigantine that has lost her mizen topmast.

The sunlight again makes a startling appearance. A ship that has really been to Australia—long, low, clipper-bowed, lofty-masted, but with the old-fashioned black on white along her sides—is slowly coming up the river with peaked yards, and men, longing for a run on shore, chanting—

" And when we arrive at the London Docks,  
Where the pretty (?) little girls come down in flocks," etc.,

in tow of one tug, with another on her starboard bow, helping the anxious pilot and the mate, who has taken the wheel, to round the windings of the reaches.

And then there is full daylight once more—a jumble of un-picturesque brick and mortar and smoke, and a sparkling river, bearing a host of anchored craft—amongst them a flotilla of yachts, schooners, cutters, yawls—two of them dressed in flags from truck to taff-rail ; and a magnificent two funnelled British-built, foreign-owned steamer, to which a boat's crew of dusky-faced, red-fezzed, grinning foreign sailors are pulling with oars that keep stroke like a dropped sheaf of spillikins.

CHARLES CAMDEN.

## THE LAY OF THE OLD PAUPER.

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I'LL be eighty, come December,  
And for more nor twenty year—  
It's 'most too long to remember—  
I've been a hinmate here.

When I got the rheumatics so bad,  
Says Squire Brown to me :—  
“ You ain't good for nought, my lad ;  
Go into the House,” says he.

“ We lives in a Chrissen country,  
And none don't need for to starve,  
There's wittles for all and sundry,  
And folks gets what they desarve.”

So I cum'd in this belief—  
My God, what a life I've led !—  
If this is hindoor relief,  
I'd sooner be houtdoor dead.

I knows—why, in course I does,  
I've larnt a bit in my time—  
That poverty's reckoned wuss  
Nor the most owdacious crime.

I hadn't no right to be born—  
That warn't for the likes o' me—  
And so they treats me with scorn ;  
But it warn't my fault, d'ye see ?

They hate me because I'm tough,  
And 'cause I increase the rate ;  
But I was rated enough  
When I worked on the Squire's estate.

The Master flies in a rage  
Whenever I meets his eye :—  
“ John Jones, why, wot's your age,  
Don't you never mean for to die ? ”

The Parson gives I a rap :—

“ You’re sulky, John Jones,” says he ;  
“ There’s many a hungry chap  
Ain’t so well off as ye.”

Then he sniffs and snuffs at my “ toke ” :—

“ Such richness is almost waste ;  
It’s enough to make *ye* choke”—  
But he takes care not to taste.

I don’t behave as I ought,  
I warn’t never sent to school,  
And I can’t be thankful for nought,  
I’m such a poor old fool ;

But I thinks, when they screws me down,  
To bury me with the “ grownns,”  
They’ll say, “ There’s some in the town  
As is wusser nor old John Jones !”

A. EUBULE-EVANS.

## A HIMALAYAN COURTSHIP.

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*“Rám, Rám!”* said Coolie No. 1 ; *“Rám, Rám!”* echoed Coolie No. 2, while several native servants leisurely advancing from their houses to meet the new arrivals took up the salutation, and exchanged *Rám, Rám*, with the half-naked host who, carrying luggage, came toiling up the steep rough pathway leading to the tea-planter’s bungalow. In five minutes the luggage was popped down and the coolies were squatting, each one close to his burthen, huddled together, coughing and choking over the pungent mixture of bad tobacco and opium, which filled the “hubble bubble” that was passed round amongst them. In five minutes more the servants, who had squatted themselves before them, had learnt the news of the speedy advent of the young lady traveller, who, in her dandy, was not very far behind, and in another five minutes’ time the young lady traveller was borne upwards and let out of her hammock-like conveyance close to the rambling verandahed house that was to be her future home. All through the long journey from her English school, on shipboard, in the train, in the Dák-Gáree, in the doolie, in the burning heat of the plains, during the wearisome toiling up and down the mountains, and amidst the fever-stricken valleys, she had cheered herself out of her girlish nervousness by thinking of her journey’s end—of the welcome that would then be hers, of the unknown Aunt and Uncle and young man Cousin who were her nearest relations, and at whose command she had, on completing her education, come so far to be, as she fondly hoped, “unto them as a daughter” and sister. All the sorrow of parting with her schoolfellows and the few friends she had in England, all the forlorn feelings she had experienced when she was passed on through India from one strange hand to another, all her terrors during nights spent in solitary dák bungalows amongst the Himalayas ; all these sufferings were to be more than compensated for when at last she should reach “Bahutburrahud.” And now here she was safe and sound on the mountain height, nine thousand feet above the level of the sea—here was the home—but the welcome—where was that ? Looking at the house it appeared deserted ; its wide verandah, half filled with old packing-cases piled up here and there without order or attempt at order, appeared not to have been swept for long ; the glass doors were unpainted and patched with newspaper, and closely shut and curtainless ; the plateau on which it stood seemed never to have been touched since it was dug and delved for the buildings, for heaps of refuse soil, and roughly hewn stone and moss-covered wood, and rusty iron, lay

around ; man's handiwork was visible enough, but it was not the hand of kindness, and as the new comer stood forlornly looking and listening for the kind faces and voices she had yearned for, the untidiness and gloom of the place chilled and depressed her almost to despair. The coolies sat impassively staring at her, thinking, if indeed they were capable of thought, of the possible amount of pice to be extracted from the unprotected Missy Baba. The servants had vanished immediately they caught sight of the dandy, to don something more presentable to European eyes than the brown blankets which were all the clothing they considered necessary when off duty, and the girl stood drooping and despairing and wondering what she should do.

Presently from out of the kennel-like servants' huts to the right of the house, a decently attired man came towards her, and with profound salaams addressed her ; but alas ! he only spoke his native tongue, and the young lady had not yet mastered more of Hindustanee than to ask for water. Domestic servants in India are, however, very ingenious in making themselves understood to a certain extent, and he contrived by signs to tell her no one was at home, but how long the family would remain away, nor what she was to do till they returned, were matters beyond his skill to communicate.

Having bewildered each other completely by vain attempts to overcome the impossibility of going into particulars, the man opened a door and ushered her into the house, the rooms of which struck her as more like cellar kitchens than sitting-rooms, and then a bright idea struck him, and exclaiming "Jān-jān, Cheeniman," he abruptly left her.

The girl threw down the wraps she had brought in her dandy, and took a survey of the apartment ; the broken stone floor was only partially covered by leopard and bear skins, and the badly joined slabs of all shapes and sizes would not have done credit to the floor of an English pig-sty ; a wide grateless fire-place with the remains of a wood fire on its blackened hearth, was the only break in one yellow washed wall, and the few chairs and tables were of the commonest and ugliest kind ; no picture redeemed the blank hideousness of the unevenly plastered walls, no signs of a woman's presence softened the bare neglected room, and above all a torn ceiling-cloth discoloured by damp hung down and bulged out, disclosing the uncut rafters of the roof. Ornament of any kind there was none, unless two bottles containing horrid-looking snakes preserved in spirits, which stood on the high plaster chimney-piece, could be termed ornamental. Faded curtains hung before the doors that communicated with other rooms : it was difficult to say which were the shabbiest, the warped, unpainted, badly-fitted doors, or the curtains that hid the doors. A brief glance into the inner rooms—just as bare and damp

and dark as the first, was sufficient, and with a shudder the girl quickly returned to the outside of the house to seek comfort in the sunshine.

What a view was before her! Height beyond height, depth beyond depth, softly swelling green hills opening into numberless valleys, the sides of which were covered with the delicate blush-like tint of the lovely geranium tree, the deeper pink of the sweet wild rose, and the pure white stars of the jessamine; each height differently shaped and differently shaded: some violet, some pale gray, some vivid green, mute emotionless guardians of an, until very lately, unknown region, all still and impassive whether storm raged or sun glowed over them, seeing generation after generation of man and beast die out century after century, while they in their undecaying grandeur stand firm and changeless. And depths so darkly purple, so wildly beautiful, full of the music of falling water, and rich with the wealth of exquisite ferns and mosses. But height and depth, each with their peculiar bloom and loveliness, were but secondary to the great charm of the unrivalled scene, for above all—the base draped in the morning haze—towered far up in the wonderfully deep-blue sky a line of glittering pinnacles the snowy range of the Himalayas! Hidden as was the base by the morning mist, these wondrous summits appeared as if literally in another world. White and sparkling, and sharply defined in mid air, they caught and chained the eyes and drew the thoughts from earth and matter of fact, and set the brain teeming with romance and fancy. Only in the early morning do they appear so brilliantly pure, so glitteringly sharp and hard and spotless; but rarely beautiful as they are at this hour, it is a beauty that awes and chills, like the beauty of death, whereas in the sunset hour they glow with the radiance of warm tinted gems, and with their gleaming roseate brows appear as an enchanted land, or as we picture the heavenly country will appear as we journey over the river of death towards it.

Frances Day stood long contemplating the scene, and listening to the unseen river that brawled over and between the rocks in the valley far below. But the picture and the sound did not raise her spirits. So many days had she been looking on like glories and listening to like music, that the charm of novelty was now wanting, and the vastness and solitude and utter absence of habitation and cultivation on the great hill-sides, made her weary for friendly faces and voices, and rendered her incapable of being satisfied with nature only.

To her Death reigned on those sublime snow mountains, and desolation in these blooming valleys. At the age of eighteen young ladies are seldom properly appreciative of the charms of scenery, though they are all educated to rave about it, and Frances Day was tired and hungry and terribly disappointed; how could she satisfy

herself with a fine view, and console herself with mere beauty of outline?

"What *am I to do?*" she cried in despair; and then faint and vexed she sank down on a block of stone and gazed angrily around her.

What an atom she was in those vast solitudes. All things in earth and heaven were regardless of her. The great eagles and vultures lazily floating in the languid air, the troop of red monkeys wildly careering on an opposite slope, the impudent crows sidling to the verandah and making darts at some bits of biscuit that had fallen from her bag, the lizards playing at her very feet, the softly waving pampas-grass swaying gracefully in the faint breeze and gleaming like unspun silk, the sweet geraniums and roses and the brawling stream, all were at home and at ease, while she returned to the home of her birth, to the home of her nearest relations, to find herself as an outcast and a stranger.

"I can't even make them understand I'm hungry!" she cried again, as if appealing to this cruel nature around her. "What shall I do when it is dark! what shall I do when I have to go into that horrible room for the night!"

This was all very unlike the conduct of a heroine; but Frances was only heroic when she was in perfect comfort and safety, and she was fast nearing that point where a good fit of weeping is inevitable, when her attention was diverted by the return of the servant, accompanied by "*Jān Cheenimān*." There was no mistaking the nationality of the latter; his small eyes, flat nose, and wide thin-lipped mouth, as much as his pigtail, full-sleeved robe and turned-up shoes, revealed his celestial origin. John Chinaman, manager of the Tea-garden, had been fetched by the Khidmuttgar as the one English-speaking person on the premises.

"I speak English," John began, smiling benignantly on the girl, and bending towards her patronisingly. "Missy be contenty, I speak to her till Master come back, one, two, three, four days, weeks, months, Master come back, Missy be contenty; I give her plenty tea, I tell servants everything for Missy; Missy may speak what she want. *I takey care.*"

Then he stood silently smiling, awaiting her speech.

"Didn't they expect me?—when will they come?—where are they?—what am I to do?" she vehemently exclaimed, till seeing she had perfectly overwhelmed her friend by her vehemence, she began again slowly,—

"Did—they—not—expect—me?"

*Jān* and the Khidmuttgar then exchanged sentences, and *Jān* answered,—

"He say yes, Missy only come too soon, all right; yes, all right."

"When will they come back?" Frances continued.

"This day—that day, sure to come, I send coolie bring them; all serene, Missy be contenty."

She shook her head; how could she draw content from this very insufficient explanation?

The Khidmuttar was the best comforter, after all; he spoke to John again, and John interpreted that food and drink should be ready quickly if she pleased. Of course she pleased, and then she had the horror of witnessing her dinner chased and killed, and plunged into a bowl of boiling water, from which the poor little half-starved fowl emerged, completely despoiled of his feathers, and while still warm with life, was trussed and broiled, and served up in an incredibly short time. But not even extreme hunger could make her eat; she drank the tea, and that revived her, and then she returned to the block of stone and sat idly looking at the mountains till the shadows climbed nearly to their summits. Starting from her seat at last, she set off with the intention of surveying the place from the height beyond, but she had not proceeded many yards up the narrow path that led through the thick brushwood and oak trees, when the servant, "Muddea," overtook her and addressed her eagerly and persuasively. He was, in fact, afraid to let her out of sight, especially was he afraid to let her go through the thick underwood, it being the haunt, not only of snakes and leopards, but occasionally of tigers also. But this he could not make her understand. She turned at his voice, and stood wondering at his gestures and volubility. Politeness made her stop and do her utmost to guess his meaning; but after a time, she took no further trouble, and vexed at the interruption, she would have pursued her way, but Muddea was undaunted. He could not touch her—a native cannot forget himself so far,—yet he dare not let her go on, when she was in a manner under his sole charge. So he jumped ahead of her, and shaking his head at the cover towards which she would go, he raised his hand to denote the height, then did his best to imitate the roaring of a wild animal. She thought he had gone mad, and wondered whether, if she screamed, anyone would come to her assistance. Oh, what a terrible fate was hers to travel so far to find an empty house with only a lunatic to depend upon! Perhaps he was not mad, now she thought; perhaps he was commencing another mutiny, and history would name her as the first victim. Trembling and white, she stood staring at the man, who, thinking his warning had taken effect, stopped his howling, and smiled and nodded reassuringly, waving his hand back in the direction of the house; but before she made up her mind whether to be murdered out of doors or in that dreary bungalow, a loud, shrill whistle suddenly drew her attention. Walking with long rapid strides up the staircase-like pathway, appeared a young Englishman, grotesquely attired in the shabbiest of badly-

made and ill-fitting clothes ; he was plain and undersized, and his complexion, though tanned, was sallow and unhealthy. Round his unbrushed head was wound a gray scarf, one end of which hung far over his back. Into an undressed hide belt were stuck a pistol, a large clasp knife, a pipe case, and a small telescope ; three natives followed close, one carried a gun and ammunition, another a large white umbrella and a long iron-spiked stick, and the third a basket of provisions ; following these again, was a stout short Bhootia pony, and a small army of coolies bringing bedding, tent, and stores, and last of all, came some half-naked villagers who had been pressed into the service, bearing a dead deer, whose graceful head and tapered horns grazed the ground as he was ignominiously borne onward legs uppermost ; some partridges and hill pheasants also swelled the young man's spoil. The exquisite plumage of the Moonal gleaming amongst the more sober birds, caught Miss Day's eyes as the procession came to a stand in the compound. She guessed the new comer to be her cousin, and in an instant all her doubts and dread disappeared, for though he was by no means prepossessing according to school-girl ideas of a gentleman, yet he was of her own blood, and she was no longer desolate.

"So you've come?" he cried, going up to his cousin, but not offering his hand, and his cheeks colouring like a bashful girl's. "I heard of you from some coolies who passed you day before yesterday. I've sent to tell mother, she's only three marches off, and father will turn up some day, but I came on sharp, and brought something to eat ; there's never anything fit to eat here, unless I kill it."

"I'm so glad you've come," she answered ; and not noticing his remissness, she held out her hand for his. He grew crimson, hesitated for a second, and then thrust his hand into hers with an air of desperation ; it was the first time in his life he had shaken a lady's hand.

He looked round him afterwards defiantly, as if he expected to see derision on his servants' faces, and was prepared to resent it. Frances guessed nothing : had he come on the scene as she had expected, awaiting her arrival and eager to receive her, she would have been quizzical and distant as most girls would be with such an uncouth young man ; but he had appeared in her sore distress, and would have been welcome had he been ten times queerer ; as it was, therefore, she accepted him unquestioningly, and could see no flaw in him.

"It will soon be dark," she said, "and I haven't unpacked anything. I didn't like to go into the house, it is so—" she stopped suddenly. He went on with her speech :

"So miserable, I suppose you mean.—Well you can't expect London drawing-rooms up here ; but when mother is at home, it looks better, she sticks things over the chairs, and pulls out bits of

crockery and all that." As he spoke he was looking at her keenly, and when he ended his words, his eyes continued their scrutiny.

"Well?" she said, laughing, "what is amiss, do I look so untidy?"

"No," he said, gravely; "I'm thinking you are too fine a lady to live up here."

Now she had been intending to open a box and take out a certain very pretty blue gown that very evening, out of compliment to her cousin, but his grave manner alarmed her.

"This is my old travelling dress," she answered, meekly; "I was ashamed of keeping it on all day, now that I have reached home."

"You are too fine for us," he replied; "wait till you see mother."

However, Frances attempted no further adornment that evening; indeed, the sight of the dark, dilapidated room which her cousin pointed out as hers, depressed her too much to permit her to remain in it long enough. He came in and arranged her boxes.

"Don't push them nearer the wall," he said; "musk rats don't smell nice to some folks, though I always keep a skin of one in my handkerchief. I like the scent, and if they once go over anything, you never get rid of the smell. They most keep to the side of the room, so if you keep clear of the walls, you're all right. Ah, you mustn't hang that on the walls; don't you know scorpions are always about? Pull your bed further out—and you'd best shut that window, snakes might get in there, and it's quick work if one finds you off guard."

She looked horrified.

"Do snakes come inside?" she asked.

He laughed. "Don't they, that's all;—did you notice those pickled ones in the other room? Mother smashed their heads; she found one coiled round the leg of her bed, and the other under father's pillow."

A good night's rest which Miss Day had in spite of her fears made all around her appear in a much more favourable light next day, and as there was every probability of her aunt's return she was hopeful and lively again. The blue dress was worn, and John Day's eyes hardly left his fair companion during breakfast: at last his thoughts found vent in words.

"What's the use of decking yourself out like that?"

"Like what?"

"Why, all those furbelow things; there's no tomasha going on—you'd better put on something sensible."

"Tomasha?"

"Yes—why you don't mean to say you don't know what a tomasha is—perhaps you don't know what a burra din is, then?"

"No, I don't."

The young man stared. "I thought any Yahoo knew that," he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, but then I'm not a Yahoo," she answered, guessing the meaning of the word by the contempt in his tones.

He burst out laughing. "That's sharp," he cried. "Well, I'm glad you've come, and I'm glad you dress up like that: mother never has new clothes; but you'll never like living here all your life."

All her life! She looked grave, and yet this must be her home until the knight of her school-girl dreams came to take her out into the busy brilliant world.

"No," she replied; "but that's not likely."

"Isn't it? why, your money is in this business and,—come, I'll tell you something, for you are not very missish and won't be huffed. Father and mother think you and I might marry and keep our money together. But, you needn't fire up,—I see I shouldn't suit you, and you are too grand for me."

Frances's face was painfully burning. She remained silent some time, growing hotter and hotter,—then she looked her cousin boldly in the face. "You've spoken out," she said, "so I'll tell you something that I did not mean to tell anyone yet. I have promised to marry someone who came out in the same ship with me."

"I'm blowed!" he cried, pushing his chair back and sticking both hands in his hair in intense amazement. "What, a baby like you already promised!"

"I beg your pardon. You forget. I'm eighteen," she exclaimed, angrily.

"And who is it?" he continued, treating the matter as a good joke, while at the same moment he suddenly felt an intense desire to cut the favoured suitor out.

"You'll know in time," she replied, with dignity.

"How long a time?"

"When he gets his company."

"What, is he only a subaltern?—pooh!"

Frances got up and walked out of the room.

John Day remained silently gazing after her; at last he got up and went off to the servants' quarters, where he soothed himself by giving his groom a horsewhipping for neglecting some work.

It was a glorious day, the sky was of deepest cloudless blue, the lofty range of snow mountains stood up against it distinctly white as if only ten instead of forty miles lay between them and Bahut-burrakhud. The glowing beauty of earth and sky soon restored Frances's equanimity, and after luncheon she made friendly overtures to her cousin, which were graciously accepted. He took her to the tea-gardens, and showed her acre on acre of tea shrubs almost ready for picking, and explained to her the different processes. He spoke well because he understood the subject. Shooting and tea-growing were the two matters on which he could talk fluently, on all other things he was stupid and ignorant. Of the world of art and

science, of polite literature and modern progress, he knew nothing ; his twenty-four years had been spent in these mountain solitudes, and he had never even seen a railway or steam-boat. Calcutta and London held about an equal distance in his hazy ideas of geography, and the greatest person he had ever seen was the Commissioner of the Province, of whom he was accustomed to speak as of a king. Among the tea-gardens, therefore, John Day showed to advantage, and the afternoon passed quickly and pleasantly enough. As the cousins returned towards home, John suddenly seized his companion's arm and pointed below with a whispered exclamation.

For an instant she saw nothing but the mountain side, intersected just below them by the rugged narrow road, but as her eyes went further she beheld what made her turn deadly pale and inclined her to run to the bungalow, therein to barricade herself. Not fifty yards beyond the road, amongst boulders of rock and bushes of tall silvery pampas, stood a large tiger; his head was turned away, and his ears being cocked and his tail gently waving showed him to be eying some intended prey. John's grasp tightened on her arm and kept her still ; he was keenly excited. "Listen," he whispered ; "climb up the hill to the house quick as you can and bring me my rifle ; it is ready loaded." But just as she was beginning to protest she would rather face a tiger than touch a loaded rifle, a quick sharp report was heard, and the huge beautiful beast gave a great bound, and then stood for an instant, with head well up and dilated nostrils, till another shot rang fiercely through the silent air and laid him low.

John watched with bated breath, and Frances shut her eyes and began to cry ; the beast shook the bushes amongst which it lay, but it never rose again. A third ball came whizzing into its side, and then three or four natives cautiously approached the place. John scrambled down the boulders, crying to the men to keep off, and left thus to herself, Frances took to her heels and flew for safety to the bungalow.

Standing in the verandah ready to fly inside, she presently beheld another arrival,—a little gentleman—an elderly likeness of John Day—who came marching up the path, followed by his pony and servants, the procession altogether similar to that which had followed the young man, only that the main figure affected the military style and wore a forage cap and a long military cloak.

Frances could have fancied it was John again. It was the new comer who had killed the tiger, evidently, for the man behind him carried a rifle.

Coming close to the house the gentleman grew rosy and nervous, and Frances attentively regarding him saw with amazement that his hair was braided like a woman's, and that his face and manner were extremely effeminate ; in fact, a lengthened scrutiny convinced her it

was a woman not a man who approached. The voice was unmistakable.

"My dear niece," it said, "I am your Aunt Louisa."

Just as John had hesitated, so did Mrs. Day hesitate to shake hands when Frances held hers out.

Here was a woman who had just killed a tiger, who feared not to travel alone in these awful solitudes, and whose dress consisted of old military clothes belonging to her husband, yet abashed and nervous in face of a young English girl. A tiger was a less formidable creature to her than a strange Englishwoman, and yet she had once been a dainty county belle.

"Did you?" Frances stammered in dismay; "did you fire that gun just now?"

Mrs. Day blushed deeper.

"I never had a chance at a tiger before," she replied; "I never saw one in all these years so near the house. Of course I've seen their footprints, yes, even here close to the house, but I hardly hoped to kill this one. John's keeping the men off till they are sure he's dead. I will give you two of the claws for a brooch."

Frances shuddered with schoolgirl affectation. Mrs. Day meantime took off her cloak and showed a woman's gown—short certainly but still a gown—underneath it, and called for a cup of tea. She was a little, attenuated, prematurely old woman, though she was not much past forty, and her small thin face, with its restless yet sad brown eyes, was tanned and wrinkled.

"Your room is the room you were born in," she said, sipping her tea as she seated herself on the ground like a native. "Your poor mother died in it. Dear me, it all seems like yesterday, though it is eighteen years ago. I'll show you the khud some day over which your father fell and was killed. It was fortunate your uncle had a fancy for tea-planting, and was willing to settle here, or your share wouldn't have fared so well. I didn't like the idea at all, it was so much pleasanter being with the regiment, but now I wouldn't go and live in a town on any account. You'll like this life as much as I do when you learn to shoot and ride. I've been here twenty years."

"Oh!" was Frances' only comment.

Mrs. Day looked furtively at her and then added, "You are very like your mother, she was a very pretty girl."

Softened by the implied compliment, Frances felt more amiably disposed towards her peculiar companion, and smiled at her affectionately. In its turn the wrinkled face softened and beamed, and Mrs. Day went on—

"Sometimes I've been here alone for weeks, until I learned not to be so cowardly, and to go with your uncle to the other plantation; the road is very nasty though, and sometimes I feel afraid even now. Our nearest neighbour is thirty-five miles off, and we never see any

white face, unless it is an occasional officer on a shooting excursion, and we have to send forty miles for our letters; but one gets accustomed to everything."

"But, aunt, how dull it must be."

"Not with a husband," Mrs. Day said, markedly. "One good companion is better than a stationful of gadding and gossiping acquaintances. Captain Day and I are quite content with each other, and by-and-by I hope John will marry, and then we shall be quite gay."

"Is John going to be married?" Frances asked, with seeming innocence.

Mrs. Day blushed, it was a difficult question.

"Of course he will marry some time or other," she said, after a little pause. "He will be well off, and he is such a favourite that he may expect to marry well. He's considered the best shot in the district."

"Does he go about a great deal?"

"Well, he has been to Nynce Tal, to a ball there, and he was asked to lunch by the colonel commanding the dépôt there, but he doesn't dance. There's nothing effeminate about him, and he doesn't care for silly girls; he looks more for sterling worth."

"But, aunt—where do you get your clothes?"

"Oh, you don't want many here; I dare say you have brought enough to last you a lifetime. Do people in England wear such beautiful gowns as that you have on, at home? It is fit for a ball, my dear."

"And you have no papers and books?" Frances asked, after assuring her aunt her gown was only an everyday affair.

"Oh, yes, we often have a newspaper, and when sportsmen find their way here they generally leave us a novel they have had with them; but one doesn't care for reading, there is always so much to be done."

"So much to be done?" Frances echoed.

"Yes; if I don't feed the poultry and the sheep, the cows, and horses, and pigs, myself, twice a day, the chances are the food will be stolen. Then there is our own food to give out every day, and often I have to cook it, for our servants take French leave, and we have to replace them by coolies who know nothing. There is plenty of mending, too, for no Dirzee will come to us; these stupid natives are so fond of bazaar life, they think they ought to have extra pay to live with us, so altogether I should be quite put out if visitors often came."

That evening Captain Day came home; he said it was rather inconvenient returning so soon, and he had ridden fifty-seven miles that day to welcome his niece. He was very polite to Frances, and looked, though his dress was rather dirtier and shabbier than his son's, a

gentleman. His son had not inherited his shy manner from his father. Captain Day had a decided, positive manner ; one knew at the first interview with him that his will was strong, and meant to be law. Frances felt, before she went to bed, too, that with all his courtesy he would brook no contradiction ; and knowing this, she felt troubled as to how he would allow of her engagement, for Captain Day was her sole guardian and trustee. Should he insist on her marrying his son, how could she flatly rebel here in these strange wilds, entirely under his control !

He was very merry over his wife's "bag" as he called it, declared he should send a notice of her prowess to the "Pioneer," and protested the tiger should be stuffed and handed down as an heirloom. The married couple were on curious terms ; he called her "Day," and consulted her as he would consult a man, arguing the point with sharpness and roughness. To his son he was as a superior being ; John never ventured to contest a matter with his father, while to his mother he was determined and downright. The Captain took the trouble next day to take his niece round the tea-gardens and into his office, where he did his best to inform her how far her interests were involved in the property.

"So long as your money remains here," he said, "you are sure of an increasing capital, for every year improves our business. I hope nothing will happen to make you wish to withdraw it, for it will be as unsatisfactory to you as it would be inconvenient to me."

Now was the time for Frances to have spoken of that young subaltern to whom she had promised herself, but the fact of his being a subaltern, besides something in her uncle's manner, withheld and frightened her. When her lover got his company, she thought, then she could speak with greater boldness ; she would be older then, more at home with her uncle and aunt, and, if they really had any desire for John to marry her, they would be aware the young man himself did not wish her to be his wife. But the young man himself was rapidly changing his mind concerning his cousin ; her youth and beauty were too pleasant to be slighted or overlooked. Life at Bahutburakhud had become wonderfully brighter since her advent ; formerly it had been his sole pleasure to go out shooting, and an unpleasant necessity to return to the bungalow, but now, after exciting stalks after game, he turned homewards with alacrity, and as eagerly looked for the flutter of his cousin's pretty muslins as he had tracked the footprints of a *khâkur*. Frances soon accustomed herself to the brusquerie of the young man, to the oddities of his mother, and to the monotony of the daily life, and all through the glowing, glorious spring she was happy as only an inexperienced girl can be. Yet she never heard from her lover. John Day asked her once why "that

fellow" didn't write ; " can't he afford the postage ? " he added rudely. She explained, without being angry at his taunt, they had decided not to correspond till he was in a position to speak to her uncle. " We are engaged," she added with becoming dignity, " and nothing can ever part us ; so what's the use of going on writing ? "

John looked at her with a sarcastic smile on his plain face.

" Perhaps it's as well," he said presently, " for I don't see how you could ever get his letters, or post yours. Father manages to get some now and then when he's anywhere near Nynee Tal, but mother never writes to any one because she has nothing to write about, and I—well, I never wrote a letter in my life, except from school to mother."

" Oh, you've been to school ? "

" Of course I have, but no further than Nynee Tal. I shall go to England some day ; I want to see the Thames Tunnel and Astley's Circus."

Frances had never been to London, and her ideas concerning it were not much more enlightened than John's, so this was a common subject of interest between them.

After that first day Mrs. Day was not at all communicative. She was busy all day, and rarely spoke anything but Hindustanee ; she never read, never wrote, never did any but the coarsest needlework. There was nothing in common between the two ladies who were thus thrown together, yet they accepted each other without question. Frances was never rebuked or advised, and never having known tenderer care than that of a schoolmistress, she missed no affectionate solicitude, nor grieved that their tastes were so opposed.

But when the weather broke up ; when for days and nights thunder reverberated amongst the mountains ; when murky clouds hid the pure white range ; when sudden gusts of wind rushed up and round the valleys, threatening to tear the house from its rocky ledge ; when deluges of rain poured down on the roof and made small pools in every room in the bungalow ; when the servants crept shivering about their daily work, miserable in their comfortless poverty ; when heavy fogs wrapt all nature up from sight, and flashes of lightning literally seared the air ; when sudden heat set in and solemn stillness fell on all nature—precursors of earthquake shocks ; when the peculiar cracking and rocking of the earth woke the girl to an overwhelming horror ; when the rains fairly set in and, for weeks, walking was an impossibility, and day after day of pour-down rain steadily continued, till the streamlet in the valley beneath became a mighty torrent, and hundreds of waterfalls dashed down the hill sides ; when the jungle was alive with leeches, which even obtruded themselves into the house ; when every piece of rock, every inch of ground, every branch of every tree, were covered with a growth of ferns and mosses and orchids, and even boots and clothes became productive of curious vegetable life,—then Frances' spirits broke down, and she told herself that sooner than

remain at Bahutburakhud for another rainy season, she would forfeit her birthright. Never a change, but from the mouldy ruins to the dank wet verandah ; never a face, but the ordinary ones of her relations ; never a word from the outer world, for even Captain Day was constrained to stay at home in the wet season, shooting and journeying being alike difficult : no books, no music, no possible amusement of any sort or kind, nothing to prevent the might and majesty of storm and tempest preying on her imaginative mind and overwhelming it with horrors. The sounds that were hardly noticed by her relations were knells of doom to her. Her dreams were frightful. She cried herself to sleep as the storm raged outside, and awoke in terror to listen to the howl of the leopard, the maniacal cry of the hyena, the yapping of the jackal, and the moaning of the owls. One night her aunt came excitedly to her bed-side.

"Get up, get up," she cried ; "there's a splendid sight in the compound—no less than nine bears. Jack is loading our guns. We can have some first-rate sport, for the moon is up!"

It was a strange sight, a great deal stranger than pleasant, Frances thought, as she peeped out into the watery moonlight, and saw the great black figures of the beasts moving amongst the few vegetables the terraced garden boasted.

"One gets from twenty to thirty quarts of grease from one bear," Mr. Day explained ; "*my* first shot, John ; you follow fire."

Another night a horrible roar alarmed her, and in the morning John showed her the huge foot-prints of a tiger close to the servants' houses.

"He tried to get into the sheep house," John said, "and must have put his paw on the great spikes of iron, for there are spots of blood close by ; it was that made him roar."

Her nerves had become very troublesome when at last the rains began to slacken ; her brilliant English complexion was pale, and her voice had lost its mirth and clearness. John saw the change, and cunningly worked upon it.

"If I'd my way," he said, "I'd never stay here in the rains ; John Chinaman can manage for a time alone quite well. I would take a house at Nynee Tal and go in for fun."

"What prevents you?" Frances asked.

"Oh ! I mean if I'd a wife. I wouldn't care to go alone ; but this place is nice enough in the fine season ; it agreed with you splendidly, didn't it ?"

"Yes," she replied, "but I'd rather die than live my life here always."

She spoke with such energy that her cousin coloured with vexation.

"Look at mother !" he said, sulkily ; "she's lived here always, and she's well enough, isn't she ?—except, of course, she can't get all the fashions ; but you can at Nynee Tal."

"I wouldn't be your mother for all the world!" she said, with so much vehemence that the absurdity of the remark was lost upon her companion, who replied with equal naivete, "Thank God you are not my mother."

She laughed... "You are buried alive here," she continued—"pray what would you do if you were very ill?"

"Die or recover," he answered, "and save a doctor's bill."

"And how could one be buried suppose one died here?"

"Oh, if you are particular you could be carried into Nynee Tal, it's only three days' march; but when I die I hope I shall be buried in the garden here, it's so nice and quiet."

"Oh, John!" she cried, "you don't know what life is; *why* don't you go to England; you don't know what nice houses, what comfort and pleasure there are there."

He gathered a heap of little stones and threw them one by one slowly over the steep side of the mountain, for they were standing on the road looking down into and over the forest of rhododendrons and oaks which clothed the precipice—then John said, without looking at his companion,

"I'll go to England on my marriage tour if you go with me, not unless!"

"Why, John!" she cried, half laughing, "how can you be so silly when you know I'm engaged? Besides you said I shouldn't suit you any more than you would suit me—so don't talk such stuff!"

"People change their minds," he continued, still looking away; "besides it would save a lot of bother if we married, and father would be pleased."

"You ignore altogether the fact of my engagement!"

"Oh, I reckon nothing of that—you flirted for want of something better to do, and he, I dare say, got wind of your money, not but that"—he added, more politely—"any fellow, even a Commissioner, might be glad to have such a pretty girl as you are. I know what officers are. I shouldn't wonder your friend is engaged to some one else by this time."

She indignantly denied the possibility.

"Till I hear he is false from his own lips," she cried, "I shall consider myself his promised wife;" and so saying she turned and walked away.

"You'd best make up your mind," John exclaimed: "father always has his way; you'd best make up your mind to have no more to say to that chap."

She was very angry as she walked home; she had begun to like John, to consider him her friend because he knew her secret, and she rather enjoyed the clumsy flirtation he carried on; not for one instant had she calculated that he who had declared her not to be to his liking as a wife would become a formidable enemy; his assurance had

been her safeguard should his father really desire their marriage, and then she began to regret the precaution she had taken of not corresponding with her lover. If she could but write to him she should be comforted, but she had herself placed the veto against it, and now she could do nothing to convince her cousin she was unchangeable. An Army List might tell her where the regiment was stationed, but to find an Army List at Bahutburrahud was about as likely as to see that day's issue of the *Times*. She was to all intents a prisoner and an exile in these horrid wilds.

"Do you never go to any town, aunt?" she asked; "is there no chance of getting books or papers anywhere? What shall we do when the winter comes?"

"Do—why, be out all day and go to bed earlier; besides, winter is our season. If any strangers are out in the district it is then, and they are sure to come here; your uncle gets papers sometimes—ask him to get some for you."

Perhaps Mrs. Day detected the inquietude of the girl's mind, and spoke to her husband on the subject.

"A little courting will put that to rights," was his comment; "but Jack is such a lout, he doesn't go the right way to work."

"Jack," he said, as he and his son strolled over to the Tea Godown, "when are you and Frances going to understand each other?"

"Oh!" said Jack, grumpily, "she's too fine for me."

"Pooh! her fine clothes will wear out soon enough, and then she'll perhaps follow your mother's example, and wear yours out for you, if you like your mother's style best."

"I don't mean that, but—she'd be moped to death here."

"Fiddlestick—she can't get into mischief then; but I can't have any shilly-shallying—take her, and be thankful she is as she is."

"Perhaps she won't take me."

"Perhaps she won't take you—chicken-hearted fellow you are! I never saw the woman yet who would refuse a good husband for no reason. Pray, what could she object to?—you are as well born and better off than she is. What would she have more?"

His father's sneering repetition of his own words annoyed John, and decoyed him into telling his cousin's secret.

"But if she knows some one else she means to have?" he cried, impatiently.

Captain Day stood still and faced his son in sudden amazement.

"Some one else," he again repeated. Then, laughing derisively, he added, "Oh! some small boy partner at a dancing school,—the girl has seen no one else."

"She has, father,—a fellow who came out with her, and she has promised to marry him."

The Captain had a long iron-tipped bamboo in his hand, and he struck it far into the ground as his son spoke.

"Then I tell you, John," he exclaimed, "she'll never get my consent; the business would be half ruined without her money. I'll never give my consent, and—you are a fool, sir, if you can't cut the presuming puppy out. I don't want to be harsh. I'm saying what I would say if she were my own child. She shan't marry a fellow no one ever heard of; she shall marry you!"

John told his father all he knew concerning his rival, and, as it happened, the Captain had heard the young man spoken of when he was last in civilized regions.

"He is a good-looking, penniless sub," he said; "she shan't have him. If you will, you shall."

Father and son had lived so long amongst the natives they had imbibed native views respecting womenkind. Woman was a little above a commodity in their estimation, rather better than a pet animal, but decidedly inferior in every respect to themselves; a little coercion, especially if it was for her good, was therefore allowable.

John felt comforted by having made a confidant of his father.

When Mrs. Day was told of "Frances' folly," as the Captain called it, she merely laughed. She, with her husband, firmly believed John as nearly perfect as a young man could be. If Frances was a silly girl, blind to her own interests, why then it was her guardian's duty to insist on her choosing the right thing.

"Poor young thing," said Mrs. Day, "she'll thank us for keeping her straight when she's old enough to appreciate sterling qualities."

So it was understood by all three that in forcing a husband of their own choice upon the young lady they would act righteously.

For some time Frances did not know how she had been betrayed. It was during John's absence at another tea-garden belonging to the estate that she was made aware of her guardian's knowledge of that fact.

The Captain had always treated her with kind politeness, and though she continued to have a girlish dread of him in his character of Guardian, they had always been on excellent terms. She was his "dear little girl," his "little partner," and he always gave her his arm in to dinner, and behaved to her at table as to a guest; so she was totally unprepared when, as they were sitting together after dinner under the verandah, he said, apropos of nothing—

"I hope there is no truth in the report of your entanglement with a beardless subaltern?"

"What, uncle!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

He slowly repeated the question.

His tone was so full of contempt and menace that the girl's heart almost stopped beating. There was no light but starlight over the dim silent landscape before them, so she could not see his face, but his voice was sufficient to frighten the foolish girl who had been so

brave and bold in avowing her love to John, and only thinking of the present, indeed hardly knowing what she said until the word was spoken, she faltered "No."

"Ah!" he answered, "I was sure you would do nothing so foolish, not to say unladylike, as to take up with the first boy who had the impertinence to consider himself a match for such a girl as you. You know I was in the army, and I know how these young fellows esteem themselves, as if the gold lace on their clothes was an ample equivalent for the gold in a woman's purse—parcel of empty-headed noodles, most of them are. Well, then, having your assurance, I am content not to enquire further into the matter, though, perhaps, as your sole guardian I ought to sift it and make the young braggart eat his words."

"Oh, no, uncle," she interrupted, her head turning giddy at the sense of her own duplicity and the inference to be drawn from his words. Could it be possible her lover, who had seemed so noble and reticent, had been boasting openly of his conquest? And yet so her uncle implied? She dare not question him, she dared not admit her engagement. She had lied, she had acted like a coward; were not these thoughts enough to make her head giddy and her soul sick?

"No," Captain Day went on, "I have said I am content to receive your assurance, knowing you are a lady, and not likely to act like a silly schoolgirl. But now let us understand each other. My son John wishes to make you his wife; he is your cousin, so I need not add he is well born. At my death he will own very considerable property. There is no one that I know more suited to you than he is. He is a good lad, and well-fitted to take care of you; best fitted, indeed, for your interests and his are the same. I have been thinking a trip to Europe would do him good; he can go so well now in my lifetime, and it would be a nice tour for a honeymoon—what do you say?"

"Uncle," at last she found strength to say, "we don't like each other."

Captain Day laughed. "Nay, my dear child," he said, "I know for a fact poor John is desperately smitten, and as for you, you need not be bashful with me. Love begets love." Then he told her they would say no more on the subject at that time, and she left him, and went to her room, utterly dismayed.

If her soldier lover was false, she thought, what did it matter what became of her. She could not despise him as much as she despised herself, but how could she go on living in these solitudes? Then, as a flash of relief, she remembered her uncle's bait—the tour to Europe—relief, even as John's wife; but, she could not and would not believe her lover was untrue, and she cried herself to sleep.

Next morning Captain Day told her, jocosely, he had dispatched a coolie to recall John. Again here was an opening for a confession,

but again Frances let her fears triumph, and was silent. Instead, however, of John returning "in wedding haste," the coolie came back alone to tell how a man-eating tiger had frightened the tea coolies away, and until John could—as he elegantly wrote—"pot the beast," he must remain where he was.

Both Captain and Mrs. Day were greatly excited at this news, and the former determined to go off to his son's help. Five men had one after another been taken by the brute, and, unless he could be killed at once, the Days would suffer serious loss through deficiency of workmen. It was with difficulty Mrs. Day could be persuaded to remain where she was. She felt sure her son would be eaten, perhaps her husband too; and it required the peremptory command of the latter to make her give up the idea of sharing his journey.

The six weeks that followed before the tiger was successfully disposed of were to Frances weeks of unmitigated dreariness and disquietude. Mrs. Day never once alluded to the matter that was distracting her young guest, and the inability to seek advice, or even to talk openly, added greatly to the girl's mental suffering. Christmas was at hand before the gentlemen returned, and the snow lay thick upon the mountains all round.

John met his cousin as he had met her at first, with a blush and a nervous tremor, and for more than a week after his return he avoided her society, and nothing was said further concerning their marriage until one morning early in the New Year, when Frances on awaking heard strange voices in the compound, strange, that is, at first, but presently one sounded that made her jump hastily out of bed and fly to her curtained window, but she could see no one, only heard with ears that flushed and tingled with overpowering delight the voice she so longed to hear once more—the voice of her soldier lover!

He spoke evidently to her uncle.

"I believe I have the pleasure of seeing Captain Day?"

"I am Captain Day."

"I am Lieutenant Græme of the 2nd Lancers."

"Indeed."

"I am on leave, as you may guess—shooting with a brother officer. I—I have the pleasure of knowing Miss Day."

"Miss Day is in England."

"In England! No, surely not; she only—"

"Am I a liar, sir?"

Frances stayed to hear no more, but began huddling on her clothes as rapidly as possible, with the intention of rushing out to give the right answer to her uncle's question, and if need be to throw herself on her lover's protection, and implore him to take her away with him; but strings and buttons were at enmity with her trembling fingers, nor can a nineteenth century heroine show herself in dishabille

even to gain her liberty ; her hair must be brushed, her collar must be pinned, and though her haste was frantic, she was too late. She ran outside to find only her uncle calmly smoking, no other human being in sight.

"Well!" he exclaimed, as if startled from a reverie. "Well, what's amiss, little one?—got out of the wrong side of bed? Eh?"

She lost control over herself; her disappointment was greater than she could bear. With tears and sobs of grief and anger, she accused him of perjury, and declared wildly she would run away and rather die in the snow or be eaten by wild beasts than remain under his roof.

He kept silence until her passion wore itself out, than he said calmly,

"You'd better go to bed again till you recover. What *do* you mean? If you have been listening to what passed between me and a puppy who rode up with all the assurance of a little king, you heard nothing but the truth. My sister, Miss Day, is in England, isn't she? What can her friends be to you that you should rave in so unwomanly a manner?"

"He meant me, uncle; he knew nothing of Aunt Day, he meant me! Oh, won't you call him back?"

"No, certainly not, it's bad enough to have every servant witnessing your conduct to me. I would rather not have an *Englishman* able to bruit it abroad."

She stood sobbing before him. What could she do? She had told a lie; here was the consequence : her lover was true; it was she who had been false and wicked. She was irresolute, but for an instant. With drooping head and voice that savoured of shame, instead of anger, she confessed her fault.

Her uncle acted his part well. "Is it possible?" he exclaimed, as if full of righteous horror at her conduct. "I thought *you* discreet and truthful. Oh, Frances, how grieved I am to find you otherwise!"

She was touched to the quick, he had touched the right chord, she was grateful for his forbearance; she was shamefaced, heart-broken, and it was in a very faint tone she again asked for her lover to be recalled.

Captain Day sorrowfully shook his head. "The young man is not worthy of you, though you have fallen in my estimation," he said. "He is hot-headed and empty-minded, let him go; with my consent you shall not see him. When you are of age you can throw yourself away if you like."

A miserable day followed. In the evening John came into the sitting room where she was alone, and asked what had occurred. He had been absent when the stranger came. She was so miserable, she was glad to speak of her trouble even to him—her enemy.

He listened kindly, and refrained from any of his customary rude remarks, nor did he say a word in his own interest.

"Don't make yourself ill," he said, touched by her dejection ; "and I'll go and try what can be done to-morrow. I'll tell the chap father made a mistake."

"Will you really ?" she cried joyfully.

"I give you my word," he answered.

She put both her hands into his, and smiled gratefully through her tears. He let her hands drop awkwardly, and went away.

But he was sincere, and he rode off early next day, and did not reappear till night.

She was standing out in the snow to see him return.

"Well !" she asked eagerly.

"I had to go all the way to Sufamutkest House," he said, "before I found him. As soon as he heard my name he insulted me. I swear I'm telling you the truth. He said he never wished to see one of my family again, and that he should be glad to get out of our neighbourhood."

"Uncle must have offended him," Frances exclaimed. "I heard loud talking while I was making haste to dress. You should have explained, John. He thinks, no doubt, I have gone back to England, and he is angry I have gone without a word to him."

"He wouldn't listen," John continued : "he was as savage as a bear. I tell you he turned his back on me, and called for his breakfast, as if I was not there. I would have licked the fellow but for you, Frances ; I was never so insulted in my life before."

"What shall I do ! Oh, what shall I do !" she cried.

"Do ! Why, show him you can do without him. Don't cry, dear ; don't cry ; there's a dear. Come along and have some tea. I'm ravenous."

She was very humble to him. He seemed her only friend ; for between her and her aunt had passed nothing concerning the stranger's visit.

Mrs. Day was sorry to see the girl so miserable, but would not invite confidence, because she could not comfort without interfering with her son's interests. A few days passed in ominous calm, and then Captain Day again spoke to his ward.

If she would promise to act cautiously for the future, he said, taking a high hand, he would give his consent to her marriage with his son, and would provide them with handsome means to allow them to visit England *via* Brindisi, that they might see some of the principal Continental cities *en route*. If they were married at once they would just be in time to travel before the heat strengthened. If she did not agree to this plan, he must remove her to his bungalow on the other plantation, where she was less likely to see undesirable acquaintances.

This was a weighty threat. Mrs. Day had told her she considered Bahutburrahud quite in the world, compared with Chotakhud. It

lay four marches further away in the mountains, on the border of a lonely lake ; it was approached by a mere coolie track, and was altogether out of the pale of civilization. To be sent there, therefore, to be shut up there all through the terrible rainy season, was an idea that made her tremble.

"Need I give an answer to-day ?" she said.

He graciously allowed her three days for consideration, "wishing to treat her with the utmost consideration compatible with his duty;" and during those three days she knew she was a prisoner. Whenever she went outside the house, she was aware her aunt and her uncle contrived to come out too—accidentally of course ; and once when she went beyond the compound with some faint idea of meeting some one with whom she could fly to her lover's care, the Khidmuttgar came sauntering after her. At the end of the given time, in her despair, she spoke to John.

"Will you not be generous, and refuse to marry me ?"

John stammered and blushed. He would do anything to please her, but not that. She could never have Lieutenant Grume : why should she not have him—John ? Wouldn't it be nice to start off for Europe before the hot spring and the dreary summer came on ? While they were away, perhaps arrangements might be made to let them live at Nyee Tal, and only visit Bahutburrahud occasionally. She should always do as she liked with him, and he wouldn't mind what she spent on her dress ! This last argument he believed irresistible, and waited to observe its effect.

But she did nothing but cry. What did she care for dress, except to make her look nice in the eyes she loved ? and she did not love one of her relations ; nor did she care where she lived if she married John—the further out of the world the better, so that she might not see strangers sneer at her husband's ignorance and eccentricity. At length a truce was made. They were to be engaged for six months. At the end of that time their marriage must take place. Six months is a long period in youth, and Frances felt for a while something of her former contentment. John never presumed upon the new relations existing between them, never attempted to be loverlike, and for that she was grateful to him ; but as the early spring stole on, and the lovely weather began to show signs of breaking up, heralding the annual deluge, her spirits sunk. Three months, four months, passed away out of the six given to her, and relief was more unlikely than ever. She would sit and watch the rosy geranium-trees fade day by day, the picturesque toon-tree unfold its feathery leaves, the wild roses drop their pale sweet blossoms, the starry jasmine grow sickly and decay ; and as each bright bud opened and each fair blossom died, she knew time was striding onward, and her unhappy fate coming nearer and nearer. In those days of solitary musings she grew to loathe the sight of the beautiful

mountains, to see no beauty in the golden glory of sunset spread over the snowy range, to weary of the incessant babbling of the clear waters of the valley below; the heights seemed to crush her soul, the immensity of the landscape to oppress her beyond endurance; the unbroken stillness, the unvarying scene, the absence of all communication with the outside world, were more than she could support; and when at last the rains had fairly begun, with their accompanying horrors of storm and tempest, her heart gave way, and dreading to die in this wilderness, she went to her uncle and begged him to let John marry her at once, and take her away out of the gloom that was killing her.

Thus with her own hand Frances hastened on her doom, and according to her wish preparations were made to start for Nynee Tal, where was the nearest chaplain. Mrs. Day's preparations were simple enough. She had some of her husband's white shirts washed to be worn by her as white bodies.

"Mother's coming out swell," John remarked; "she's written for an alpaca gown—the first new gown she's had for twenty years."

John himself ordered a black tail-coat and stone-coloured trousers for his wedding suit; he wished to have a waistcoat made out of the skins of musk-rats, but that his father peremptorily forbade; and black satin, spotted with amber, was finally ordered. The bridegroom did not discuss his wedding dress in his bride's presence, or his taste might have roused her from her apathy.

She was going away from Bahutburrahkhud; that was all she understood clearly in those last days of her stay there. All beyond possessed no interest; she was going to shift the scene, to lose sight of the solemn ghostlike snowy mountains, to hear sounds of life and progress, instead of the wail of wild beasts and the moan or shriek of the fierce storm-blast. All other senses seemed dulled. She was going into civilization; that was enough; and with feverish impatience she grudged every moment of her stay in these hated solitudes. The last day arrived. Bedding and provisions were packed. Forty coolies lay in the outhouses, ready to start at dawn with their burthens; and tired out with packing, Frances sat in the verandah, towards sunset, looking her last on the magnificent scenery which she had come to consider hateful. Grander and more solemn than ever it stretched before her; deepening purples and brightening golds, faintest rose and palest gray, brilliant orange and red tints, were on hillside and sky; the shout of the cuckoo, the gamut of the koela, the laugh of monkeys, the chatter of the green parrots, the clear, sweet whistle of the white-ruffed blackbird, the low, melodious song of the bulbul, and the harsh bass of the indestructible crows, made music in the air; the evening was very calm; there was a lull in the season,

and as she sat and gazed, and felt herself refreshed, she was constrained to admire and not detest the land that had brought her so much sorrow.

"But I will never come back again," she said to herself. "I would rather die;" and then wild plans for running away and seeking protection so soon as she reached the European station, ran riot in her brain.

By-and-by John Day came up the stairlike path; he had been out for hours, inquiring the state of the roads, which, never very good, were constantly washed away during the rains. He got off his pony at the entrance to the compound, and taking his rifle from his servant, came with his usual awkward stoop towards his cousin. She looked at him and noticed he was tired, when in an instant his figure became erect, his face full of excitement, and to her horror, she saw him raise his rifle and aim at her.—When, after a few moments, she regained her consciousness, she found herself on the sofa, and, to her surprise, uninjured, while the Days stood watching her, and several servants peeped in at the open doors.

"You were nearly killed," Mrs. Day exclaimed, as the girl's eyes inquiringly sought hers; "but not by poor Jack. As he came towards you he saw a *Tic polonga*, the most venomous snake in India, raising its head to dart at you. No one has ever been bitten by it and recovered; had he hesitated one instant you would have been poisoned."

"If I'd stopped to think," John said, "he'd have been at you, the brute!"

"But *you* might have killed me!" Frances said, ungratefully ignoring the service he had rendered.

"Pooh!" said the Captain, "I should hope John knows how to aim; the pity was he only had a rifle, for the reptile is blown to pieces, and he would have bottled famously if he'd been killed tenderly."

This incident completely upset poor Frances. She had to give up the idea of riding next day, and to go in a dandy; so instead of having only one dandy in the cavalcade—that in which the ayah was carried—there were *two*, a most fortunate circumstance, as after events proved.

They were ready to start at dawn, but were delayed by the difficulty of getting the coolies, for though the latter had been collected over night and their burthens allotted each, yet the coolie nature is against regularity, punctuality, and common sense.

"Where are the fellows for the dandy?" the Captain cried in vain, and it took some moments while John went over the servants' houses and captured one man here coolly smoking his hookah, and another there plaiting his hair, and others just preparing their morning meal of unleavened cakes, one and all evincing a stolid indifference to time

to their employers, and, after the manner of the East Indian, to *everything* except their stomach and their pay. Then the bundles had to be re-arranged—some could only carry on their heads, some could only consent to convey burthens slung on sticks, others must have shoulder loads, and, as usual, all spoke at once,—coolies, servants and masters—or rather all *shouted* at once, making a noise that to Frances's inexperienced ears must lead to violent action. But the native rarely uses his limbs if his tongue may have fair play. At last all the loads were taken up and the procession started.

Mrs. Day rode a Bhootia pony, as did also her husband and son. The lady wore an enormous sun-hat, in shape like two porters' knots joined *vis-à-vis*, and the favourite old military cloak was tied in at the waist by a leather strap, from which hung a large clasp knife, a long hook for taking stones out of the pony's foot, a currycomb for her own hair and the pony's mane, and a small case containing a saddler's needle and thread and scissors, to mend any disaster that might happen to the saddlery. She kept the coolie who carried the day's provisions at her side, while the Captain made it his business to watch the progress of all the baggage, threatening stragglers and encouraging the willing ones in tones that reverberated strangely through the silent land. A gray dull day had followed the gorgeous evening, but it was wonderful to have a day without rain at that season, and the travellers were thankful for the absence of the sun. John rode as near to the dandy as he could, and Frances, making herself bear in mind she owed to him her life, did her best to respond to his remarks cheerfully. At noon they stopped at a lonely stone shed, all round which were the marks of recent fires and litter of ponies. Here they lunched, and let the servants rest. In a very few moments fires were kindled, meal bags opened, and a lively scene of cooking and washing commenced. The brawling stream, whose course the mountain road followed, was here conveniently accessible, and served for drinking, cooking, and bathing purposes. Here, kneeling over the water, was a man noisily brushing his teeth with a bit of bamboo, and rinsing throat and mouth violently. A few yards further stood one knee-deep in the water performing his ablutions. There, squatting close to the brink, over a handful of fire, were two or three kneading bread and mixing the dough with water; while close by sat half-a-dozen idlers smoking, and letting their tired feet play in the grateful stream. All day till sunset the travellers journeyed on, now on a level with the bed of the river, now hundreds of feet above it, now climbing a narrow ledge midway up the barren hill side, now rounding a deep ravine amidst rhododendron woods, and oak or pine forests; sometimes having a limitless view, over countless mountain ranges, to where a boundless level, canopied by heat haze, proclaimed the vast fiery plains; and sometimes seeing only a few yards ahead as the path narrowed and

wound amidst a wilderness of exquisite ferns and creepers growing amongst the tall rank underwood and trees. Countless streams trickled or dashed down their mossy beds, and every angle in the road was lined with a profusion of rare plants and shrubs—children of the intense damp of the rainy season—that would have made the fortune of an English florist. Such a wealth of loveliness, such unimagined luxury of colouring and foliage, such indescribable delicacy and harmony of tints, appear year after year in those distant wilds, seen but by a dozen creatures capable of appreciating them.

With infinite care and immense expense, the wife of the millionaire forms a collection of sickly ferns and orchids which she proudly shows to a favoured few, and in the dampest corner of her trim grounds she rears a grotto with an artistically trained flow of purling water, to see which visitors press eagerly; but amidst the vast Himalayas, God has bountifully strewn countless beauties—the rarest and loveliest of their kind—and has formed nooks and views that make the enraptured traveller breathless with their exceeding beauty, though the natives of these regions are of a lower type, are more ignorant and more stupid, more debased in their habits and repulsive in their persons than any other of the natives of wide-spreading Asia. Beasts of burthen, and nothing higher, are these poor mountaineers, toiling up and down the breakneck paths as doggedly and with little more intelligence than the salt-laden sheep, or the ragged undersized tattoo that conveys cloth and stores to the mountain towns. These poor wretched people were the only human beings met with all the long way, and few of them betrayed any curiosity at sight of the Europeans.

"We shall see plenty of white faces at Nynee Tal," Frances said.

"Yes," Mrs. Day replied; "and don't they look washed out after these bronze-coloured people?"

"Yes," her husband added. "No doubt the dark skin and the large black eyes of the East Indian are far handsomer than our pale undecided complexions."

"I suppose one gets accustomed to anything," Frances said with a deep sigh, while in her heart she felt convinced neither time nor custom could reconcile her to John Day and Bahutburakhud.

They passed the night at a dák bungalow on the edge of a tremendous landslip, which had occurred two years before, and the Captain hoped, as they separated for the night, the ground under their feet would not fall till they were off it.

"It isn't safe," he said, complacently; "but it's too wet to camp out, so we must risk it."

A violent storm came on during the night, and the morning dawned on leaden skies and a drenched earth. There was a consultation as to the prudence of waiting for fine weather, but Mrs. Day decided against delay.

"The roads will be worse after each storm," she argued, "and we are not half-way through the rains yet."

The argument was irresistible, and in a steady drizzle the party pursued their journey. Mrs. Day's groom did not appear when her pony came round, and on inquiry he was declared to be stricken down with fever and ague. With the foolhardiness, or rather senselessness of his people, he had slept out in the open grass, and when the storm came on had been too heavy with sleep to change his resting-place.

"Fool!" cried the Captain, "he deserves a rare good licking, and if he isn't well by the time we return, I'll give him one;" but the Captain never returned to carry out his threat.

As they proceeded, they found the road had suffered much from the night's tempest, and every native they met declared it had been carried away in places; but allowances must always be made for Eastern exaggeration, and they pushed on. For once, however, the natives did not exaggerate, and presently a turn in the path disclosed a great gap in it. Here, however, the earth had not fallen far—the mountain side projected within a few yards below, and the débris of the road afforded safe footing for a scramble to the other side of the dislodgement. The next stoppage was more serious.

The pathway continually penetrated above deep ravines far into the heart of the mountain, till reaching the end of the opening it was joined by a rustic bridge over the deep drop to the corresponding pathway running along the further side. In this particular far-reaching inlet, a superb sheet of crested water came grandly over the face of the hill, and fell with roar and crash sheer down the precipice below the road. The little bridge had been broken by the force of the water, and afforded no footing except for a yard or so from each bank.

Captain Day shouted to a group of coolies composedly seated on the other side, and they told him the water would subside in the course of a few hours, when it would be possible to patch up the bridge.

"A few hours!" the Captain cried impatiently. "Inert idiots these nigs are. Let's have a rope and go hand-over-hand."

Even John objected to this plan as too dangerous an experiment, but both father and mother laughed at his prudence.

"Your mother and I," he said, "have crossed many a worse thing than this. I'm not going to sit shivering here till that drop thins; if only that fool your mother's syce were here, it would be comparatively easy, for he knows the dodge so well. You and Frances can wait if you choose."

John was stung by his father's contemptuous tone. "If any one can cross," he said, "I can; look here," and darting forward, he ran along the quivering pole that stretched a little way over the flood, and which had been one of the two main supports of the bridge, and

thence, with a bound imitated from the tiger, he alighted safely on the other side.

The phlegmatic natives were roused into sufficient excitement to utter "Wah, wah!" admiringly at his daring, while his parents loudly applauded him.

Mrs. Day jumped off her pony—"I can cross in the same way," she exclaimed, "it's not much of a jump, after all."

Her husband pulled her back. "Nay, twenty years ago you could; not now. Don't be a fool, Day," he cried, "here's the rope."

So a stout rope was flung across the chasm, and clinging to it with his hands, his body hanging over the flood, Captain Day worked himself safely across, and his wife prepared to follow. For Frances there was nothing but waiting; she was horrified at the mere idea of venturing after her aunt, and disagreeable as was the thought of the weary waiting, she was resolved to be patient rather than venturesome. Mrs. Day set out valiantly, her slight little figure with its extraordinary garments surging to and fro, as she went on hand over hand—such thin little hands. She had got to the further side, and her husband, bending down, had already hold of her wrist, when she suddenly let go with one hand, and dragging her husband with her, she fell down the precipice quicker than the roaring water!

It was barely eleven o'clock when this happened, but it was eight in the evening before the travellers proceeded on their way. For hours the cousins waited one on each side of the cruel torrent, till little by little the roar subsided as the fall thinned. As soon as it had reached a less formidable spread, the young man and his servants clambered over the hill-side, and after long and agonising search came upon the mutilated bodies. Their death must have been instantaneous, for they had fallen nearly 100 feet. They lay within a few yards of each other; Mrs. Day, the lightest, having dropped furthest. It was a work of time and great difficulty to carry them up to the road. Meantime a number of villagers had collected to mend the bridge, over which Frances was carried just as John and his precious burthens appeared.

"You will ride mother's pony," he said, "we want both dandies."

He spoke in his usual manner, and issued his orders promptly. He made no comment upon what had happened, yet it was plain he was sorely wounded; his shriek when his parents fell had reached Frances above the rush of the waterfall, and for an instant he had seemed about to throw himself headlong after them. His cousin did her best to hide the terror she felt at riding the dangerous roads in the uncertain light, for though the moon was up, the sky was thick with clouds. But all through her life the horrors of that day and night were vividly present to her whenever she was out of health. The two marches to Nynee Tal had to be made one,

on account of the necessity for reaching the station as quickly as possible, so all through the night the ghastly procession toiled on.

Every rustle in the jungle, every cry of wild animals, every sound made the girl's heart beat with terror. When they entered the woods, torches were lighted, and the men shouted at intervals to scare away the tiger and the leopard, but on the unsheltered ledge over the bare mountain side the torches were extinguished, and in the dim light the awful depths below assumed yet more awful profundity. First in the procession the two dandies were carried, and their heavy swing between the bearers was horribly significant ; after them rode John, then Frances, then the Ayah, mounted on the Captain's pony, and last of all the baggage. Now and then they passed a heap of coolies huddled together for protection round a bonfire. Sometimes a halt was made to allow the men to refresh themselves for a few moments with the hookah, but the silence of the little party was rarely broken. It was almost noon next day when the last great ascent was made, and they saw stretched 800 feet beneath them the deep dark lake and the picturesque houses of Nynee Tal. As they began to descend John placed himself on foot in front and whistled the "Dead March in Saul" solemnly until the dāk bungalow was reached.

"Father would have had that played before him had he died while an officer," he said, as he assisted his cousin from her pony. "If he could have heard me, he'd have been pleased I showed him such an attention."

That evening when the bodies were carried over to the burial-ground, John, arrayed in what was to have been his wedding suit, again slowly marched at the head, whistling.

The chaplain stopped him at the entrance to the church-yard, and by reminding him of his duty as chief mourner, prevented the poor fellow making himself a butt for scoffers any longer.

On his return to the bungalow he freed Frances from her engagement to him.

Ten years afterwards Frances Day, who was living with a maiden aunt, met her cousin John again. They had parted at Nynee Tal the day after the funeral, she to remain with the chaplain's wife till she could find an escort to England, he to return to his tea-plantation. Since then they had not even corresponded, though they were aware of each other's movements through their agents. Very soon after Frances' coming of age John had sold the estate and quitted India. He travelled over the Continent of Europe, and did his best to repair the want of proper cultivation in his boyhood by seeking the society of clever men and studying standard literature. When he presented himself to his cousin she was struck by the improvement in his manner and person. Mr. Day, the accomplished traveller, bore little

resemblance to "Jack Sahib" of Bahutburakhud. Frances was altered for the better too. The terrible accident she had witnessed, the mental trials she had undergone, had borne good fruit. The realities of life, its uncertainty, its trials, had been brought home to her, and when she again met John she could appreciate the good sense, and reverence the good heart. They saw each other constantly for a month ; at the end of that time John asked her to be his wife.

"There is no one but you in all the world," he said, "who has the same memories with me. I have many good friends, and yet at times I feel so terribly alone, so crushed with the memory of that sorrowful past, that I long even for old Muddea or 'Jān Cheeniman' to speak to of my old home. I have done my best during the last few years to make myself more like other men of my position, and tried hard to rub off the rusticity of my bringing up. I have even taken pains to brush my hair," he added, smiling, "but until lately I never allowed myself to think why I did it all. Since meeting you again I have discovered my aim has been to become less disagreeable in your eyes, Frances. I know better now than to press myself upon you by saying our marriage would save bother, but indeed it will save my life from being cheerless and purposeless. Give me the right to make you forget the sadness of our former engagement in a new one under happy auspices. I have loved you all these years, and you are associated with my tenderest memories."

Surely there is no greater magician than Time. Frances had once declared from her heart, she would rather die than marry John Day, and now she admitted she could imagine no greater earthly happiness than wedded life with him.

"What about Lieutenant Græme ?" John asked, when he had assured himself of his cousin's affection.

She laughed and blushed as she remembered her high and mighty behaviour concerning the said Lieutenant Græme.

"I saw him at a ball in London five years since," she said ; "he was good enough to recognize me and to ask me to dance, and afterwards he begged to be allowed to introduce his wife to me !"

"Well, and you shrieked and fainted, of course ; or assumed an appearance of dignified scorn, eh ?"

"No, I didn't. I was so astonished at not feeling anything but amused surprise that I forgot what was due to my betrayed affection, and actually got up quite a liking for the young lady, and used to visit her and play with her babies till they returned to India."

"But you must have lost all your gushing romance !" John said. "Ah ! you are not the same Frances Day who begged my father to hasten our marriage. Pray, are you going to insist on no delay this time ?"

J. MASTERMAN.

## POWDER AND PATCHES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE SACRISTAN'S HOUSEHOLD."

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DUST and shadows ! "*Pulvis et umbra sumus*," said Diderot to his contemporaries, quoting ancient wisdom, and the words, hackneyed enough as applied to humanity in general, have a striking and sinister signification when used to characterize that brilliant butterfly generation, which was so soon to have its painted wings scorched and shrivelled in the conflagration of the great French Revolution.

But for our present purpose the Latin words might be freely rendered "Powder and Patches ;" for it is of a famous portrait painter that the following pages are to treat—of the Venetian artist Rosalba Carriera, whose pictures in pastel excited the highest enthusiasm among the amateurs and cognoscenti of her day, and still retain an honourable position in the art collections of Europe. She painted the *pulvis et umbra* of the days of the Regency ;—glittering dust, in truth, and gay magic-lantern shadows ! And the medium she used to pourtray them was a singularly appropriate one. "Pastel was the true means of representing these personages. Pastel gave the true colour of their century ; its powdery butterfly tints were suitable for these fickle butterflies, these voluptuous Phalenes ! What mortal could ever have reproduced them in oils ?" Thus writes M. Julius Hubner, of the Dresden Museum. *Pulvis et umbra erant* !

Although not an artist of the first rank, Rosalba Carriera has for us the great and interesting merit of having preserved faithful representations of the men and women of her time. The medium she used would scarcely have been chosen by a genius of a robuster type ; although, as a recent biographer of hers truly observes, all tools are good to a great workman. This writer (M. Alfred Sensier) further says : "Rosalba chose this way because it was the road to success, and because she had not the force to compel Fortune, but only to follow her. But having once entered on this path she availed herself of all the advantages which it offered, with real talent."

Some persons have erroneously supposed her to be the inventor of pastel painting ; but there is abundant evidence to show that such was not the case. In the first place, as M. Sensier points out, this method, or one closely analogous to it, was known to the most ancient masters. It would not be difficult to point out traces of it in the sketches, cartoons, and studies which those masters have left us. Later, Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, Guido, &c., appropriated to themselves certain qualities of the pastel. Indeed, there needs but one sunny day to transform "*distemper*" into pastel. Water colours became pastels when they were solidified into a paste and dried. And

the same medium which serves to bind the colours in distemper painting, i. e. gum, is used also to give solidity and firmness to the pastel.

It is nearly certain that the first to suggest to Rosalba the use of pastels, was an Englishman named Cole, who was in Italy as early as the year 1704. Letters of his to the Venetian artist are extant—notably one written from Rome,—wherein he makes mention of her works in pastel, and promises to send her by some English friends of his a supply of pastels and some tinted paper.

But although Rosalba Carriera by no means invented painting in pastel, yet she undoubtedly made it the fashion amongst the great folks of her day throughout Europe. And, what is far better, she produced by this means a large number of delicately conceived, highly finished, and interesting portraits.

Rosalba was born at Venice on the 7th of October, 1675. Her father was a native of the neighbouring city of Chioggia, and her mother a Venetian, whose maiden name was Alba Foresti. Her parents held the rank of respectable citizens, but were very poor. Her father filled a government office under the Venetian Republic, in Chioggia, whence he was removed to Venice before Rosalba's birth. But the rest of the Carriera family, and Rosalba's heirs (*i. e.*, the Pedrottis and Penzos) always inhabited Chioggia; and her first biographer, the Canonico Vianelli, was himself a *Chioggiole*.

Rosalba had two sisters, both younger than herself: Giovanna and Angela. The affectionate friendship which subsisted among the three sisters was not broken to the close of their lives. Giovanna died unmarried in 1737, when Rosalba was sixty-two years old. Angela married young. Her husband was Antonio Pellegrini, a Venetian painter, who possessed the gift of covering huge spaces of wall or canvas with showy pictures in an incredibly short space of time. But there is no need of further allusion to him at present.

Of the infancy and early youth of Rosalba very little is known. She lived in the midst of a family who had to endure frequent struggles with poverty. Her father's salary did not suffice for the needs of his household, and her mother felt it necessary to bring her own personal exertions to their assistance. She became a lace-maker, and devoted herself especially to the manufacture of that elaborate and rich kind of lace called *Venice-point*. It was a manufacture which at that time had no equal of its own species in Europe. Eminent artists used to furnish designs for this elegant fabric, and some of our little Rosalba's first efforts with her pencil were made in drawing patterns for her mother to work from. Andrea Carriera, her father, drew, and even painted a little. There were artistic traditions in the family; for Andrea's grandfather, Andrea Pasquelino, had been a painter of considerable merit.

Thus the little band of workers—father, mother, and daughters

(for the two younger girls were early enlisted into the common service), lived peaceably, industriously, and obscurely, throughout the glittering days of Venetian decadence, undisturbed by the wars which agitated the reign of Louis the Fourteenth of France, and kept his Italian neighbours in a ferment. Obscurely and industriously they lived, but one might venture to say not unhappily. Indeed, for Rosalba that time must have held elements of very great happiness. She was employing the artistic faculties of her nature, however humbly, for the assistance of those she loved best. And it may be that those years of youth, and toil, and hope, were often looked back on with a vague regret by the successful artist, the idol of fashionable dames and cavaliers, the caressed and flattered of princes, in the midst of her brilliant and busy career. She was to the last a prodigious worker. And on one occasion she records in her diary that she had not slept for two nights past, from having overworked herself.

The designing patterns for, and the dainty manufacture of, Venice point, went on prosperously enough among the Carrieras for some time. But the tide of fortune, which had never risen high with them, ebbed suddenly. Venice point-lace went out of fashion! The poor mother, though seeing her usual means of gain diminish, and finally cease, lost no whit of her courage and industry. She applied herself to making tapestry work for furniture. She seems to have been a thoroughly sound-hearted, excellent woman. The best testimony to her worth—and the only one, we may be sure, which she much valued in her old age—lies in the fact of her children's unchanging affection and respect for her to the close of her long life.

But tapestry work, like lace-making, seemed to Rosalba but a temporary and inadequate resource. Her force of character and the consciousness of her own talents alike impelled her to strive for a higher career than such pursuits offered. Fashion, which had ruined the lace-making, afforded a chance of something better—a chance on which Rosalba seized with the energy that belonged to her. As M. Sensier expresses it, “The empire of tobacco had prevailed.” That is to say, that all the fine folks, and the folks who desired to be fine, took snuff: and the painting and ornamenting of snuff-boxes became quite a lucrative business.

There was in those days in Venice a Frenchman named Jean Stève, whose profession it was to paint miniatures on snuff-boxes. From him Rosalba received some hints, and so put them to profit that in a very short time she acquired a reputation for delicacy and skill in the painting of snuff-boxes. But this, of course, did not satisfy her legitimate ambition. She soon devoted herself to painting miniature portraits; and having taken lessons from Antonio Laggaire and Diamantini, made the further advance of trying her hand at oil-painting.

During the lifetime of her Italian biographer, the Canon Vianelli, there existed a curious specimen of Rosalba's efforts in oils. It was in Chioggia, in the house of her heirs, the Pedrottis, and represented his Majesty, Augustus the Third, Elector of Saxony, and King of Poland, with a huge peruke on his head, and wearing a red coat, and a cross on his breast.

But oil-painting was never seriously pursued by Rosalba as a profession. Partly, no doubt, she measured her own strength and found it wanting, beside even contemporary painters, such as Pietro Liberi, and others; not to speak of the mighty masters by whose works she was surrounded in her native Venice. Partly also, I think M. Julius Hubner's dictum to be a correct one, and that the true way to pourtray the world on which her searching brown eyes looked, was felt by Rosalba with feminine intuition to be the dainty tints of the miniature painter, or the smooth, soft, powdery pastels.

Already, in the year 1698, Rosalba had begun to be known as a clever miniature painter, and by the middle of 1700, her reputation had spread abroad beyond her native country. The war brought foreigners into the north of Italy, and Venice, remaining neutral between the belligerents, became a sort of common ground, and was visited by the officers of both armies. Commissions flowed in upon Rosalba. Periwigged heroes were eager to carry off with them specimens of her talent. It became the rage to order one's portrait of the Venetian artist. From this period miniature painting absorbed all her time, and also, unfortunately, the extreme minuteness of the work, which she carried to a very high degree of finish, began sensibly to affect her eyesight.

The exact date at which Rosalba renounced all other methods of painting for pastel, cannot be fixed, but it must have been *about* the year 1704, at which period, as has been previously stated, she became acquainted with the Englishman, Cole. No sooner had she been initiated into the resources of pastel painting, than she withdrew to a country house belonging to a certain Signor Gabrielli (an old friend of her family whom she frequently mentions in her diary and letters), and there shutting herself up so as to be free from the influence of any other artist, she set herself to paint from nature all that she saw around her. Her first portrait was that of a female servant of the house, and she went on to take the portrait of every member of the family. Then, being sure of her powers, she returned to Venice, where this new method carried her to the height of popularity. She was speedily talked of as the *prima pittrice* of Europe, in her *genre*.

In 1705 she was elected a member of the Academy of Saint Luke, at Rome. Her diploma picture was praised with an enthusiasm which appears highly exaggerated now. The painter Crespi, known under the name of Lo Spagnuolo, declared that to find Rosalba's

equal it would be necessary to bring Guido Reni to life again ! And in that day Guido Reni held a much higher position in the world of art than a later posterity has confirmed him in. Honours were showered thickly on our Rosalba during the years succeeding her admission to the Roman Academy. Frederick the Fourth, King of Denmark, passed through Venice in 1709, and ordered his own portrait of her, and, moreover, the miniatures of twelve of the most beautiful Venetian ladies of the day ! On whom the somewhat invidious task of selecting the "twelve most beautiful ladies" fell, is not stated ! The next year she received a gold medal from the Elector Palatine in return for a pastel picture which he had ordered from her. The medal was attached to a gold chain and ring, weighing twenty ounces, and enclosed in an enamel box valued at six hundred crowns.

Meanwhile Angela Carrera's husband, Antonio Pellegrini, had been prospering in the world. He was sent for to Düsseldorf to execute some works on a large scale. Thither his wife accompanied him, thus breaking up for a time the united little family circle at Venice. M. Sensier calls Pellegrini "a terrible *prestidigitator*." It is certain that he undertook and executed colossal pictures in an incredibly short space of time. And it is probable that this fatal facility injured the legitimate development of his talents, as it has injured the talent and the fame of greater painters than he.

The year 1715 was an important one in Rosalba's life. In it she made the acquaintance of two celebrated men. One was Pierre Crozat, a French financier of great wealth, and the first amateur and collector of works of art in Europe. The second acquaintance was no other than the afterwards notorious John Law, the inventor of the "system," the favourite of the Regent, and the proximate cause of unspeakable confusion and ruin to the finances of France. At the time when Rosalba first knew him, he was an outlaw who had fled from justice. He had made his escape from the prison in which he was confined for having killed a certain Mr. Wilson in a duel in London, and fled to the Continent. He seems to have been attracted to Venice by the opportunities which that city afforded for gambling speculations on a large scale. He kept a Pharaoh table, and seems to have prospered by it for a time.

Rosalba's acquaintance with him was afterwards renewed, as we shall see, in Paris, when he had reached the topmost height of his rocket-like course. After his fall he returned to Venice, where he died, and lies buried in the Church of San Moisé in that city.

A very different personage was Pierre Crozat. He, like the rest of the world, hastened on reaching Venice to visit Rosalba's studio, and, again like the rest of the world, was charmed with what he saw there. He appears not only to have been delighted with Rosalba's artistic skill, but to have conceived a real esteem for herself. He pressed

the Venetian artist to visit Paris, where all the *beau monde* was prepared to pay her homage (there was no other *monde* worth mentioning but the *beau monde* in those days!), and he offered her the princely hospitality of his house, which was to be her home during her stay in France. Before leaving Venice he induced her to promise to accept his generous offer. It was, however, some time before this promise was fulfilled. In 1719, Andrea Carriera, Rosalba's father, died. It would seem as though his death removed an obstacle to the foreign journey, for in the following year it was undertaken and carried out.

In the month of March, 1720, Rosalba, with her mother, her two sisters, and her brother-in-law Pellegrini, who had by this time returned from Düsseldorf, set off for Paris, where she arrived in the April following, after having made a short stay at Lyons.

Rosalba, her mother, and her unmarried sister Giovanna, were all three the guests of the hospitable M. Crozat. The Pellegrinis lodged at an inn near the Hôtel Crozat.

From this time commences a diary kept by Rosalba during her stay in Paris. It consists of the merest jottings, dry memoranda of her daily employments, and so forth, and was never intended to meet other eyes than her own. But the diary falling into the hands of the worthy ecclesiastic Vianelli, Canon of the Cathedral of Chioggia, and an enthusiastic admirer of the talents of his countrywoman, he published it some years after her death.

Vianelli possessed a large mass of letters forming part of Rosalba's very extensive correspondence, and from this source he was enabled to furnish copious notes and explanations, which elucidate the brief memoranda contained in the diary. Other subsequent editors have carried the task of illustration still farther, so that the skeleton may be said to have had its dry bones re-clothed with flesh and blood. Read by the light of Vianelli's and Sensier's notes, the meagre little *libro di ricordi* furnishes a faithful picture of Rosalba's daily life in Paris, and affords strange glimpses of some of the frivolous, glittering, pleasure-seeking personages who filled it.

What a world it was into which the little grave-eyed Venetian was plunged! She reached Paris in the midst of the Regency, when the fever of Law's financial "system" was at its height. Everything seemed to partake of the kind of delirious agitation which this huge scheme of financial gambling infected society with. Fashion was not merely a mode, but a mania. There was neither moderation nor repose. People did not content themselves with admiring, they adored. They rushed to the Rue Quincampoix, enticed by the desire of gain, or to the Hôtel Crozat, attracted by the reputation of our Italian artist, with almost equal avidity and excitement.

The Court set the example of receiving Rosalba Carriera with the most flattering marks of distinction, and it may be said that all the

grand seigneurs of the day vied with each other in paying her homage. Louis XV.—then a child of about ten years old—was one of her first sitters. After the King, came the Prince de Conti, Mesdemoiselles de Charolois, de Clermont, de la Roche-sur-Yon, princesses of the royal family; the Duchess de Villeroi, the Countess d'Evreux, the Marchioness d'Alinecourt, and all the great ladies of fashion. The Regent himself deigned to visit her studio, and Madame de Parabére and Madame de Prie figure on her list of visitors.

It is curious to see how much, and how little the influence of the age, and of the beings around her, acted upon the character of a woman like Rosalba Carriera. She was herself, in no cant or conventional sense of the word, a virtuous woman: earnest, industrious, modest, honest, and chaste, in the midst of a society to which, speaking broadly, the absolute reverse of all the foregoing epithets might not unjustly be applied. For although the wickedness of Paris under the Regency was doubtless *larger* and *louder* than in any other spot under the sun, it must not be supposed that the social corruptions of that epoch were confined to France. The pictures of life in Venice towards the close of the eighteenth century, which still remain limned by the hands of contemporary observers, are appalling in their cynical hideousness. Rosalba was no country mouse suddenly brought from rural seclusion into the whirl of a dissipated capital. She was a woman of forty-five years old, who had for a long time past lived in the world—and in the Venetian world!

Yet the steady simplicity of her nature appears to have resisted corruption as far as her conduct was concerned. With regard to her *opinions*, the case seems to have been otherwise. She was herself incapable of behaving in any relation of life after the manner of those great ones of the earth, against whom no spark of moral indignation seems ever to have been kindled in her breast. She accepts them as the most normal and natural manifestations of human nature, and is ready to praise the “princely virtues” and “noble sentiments” of such men as the Regent and Augustus III., King of Poland.

The Carriera family was surrounded with every luxury, and served with almost affectionate attention under the roof of the Parisian Mécénas Pierre Crozat. A carriage was even placed at Rosalba's disposal. It is pleasant to find that host and guests remained on the most excellent terms with each other to the last, and that Rosalba behaved with perfect tact and discretion in a position which was not altogether an easy one.

Amongst the entries in the diary, is this characteristic one:—“June the 21st, I went to the King” (she was engaged in painting his portrait in pastel) “with a bad headache. Afterwards I saw the Duke,” (the Maréchal de Villeroi, the King's governor,) “who took me by the hand and said, ‘It must be very agreeable for you that the King is so patient!’”

Doubtless the King's "patience" was wonderful, but probably somewhat less than that of the poor artist resolutely setting to work in spite of her headache! Yet such was the tone of the times, and so much as a matter of course did people accept the doctrine that there was some peculiar divinity in kings, that the good Canon Vianelli, unable to restrain his admiration, exclaims in a note to this entry:—"It was, indeed, not a small thing that a great monarch, only ten years old, should have had the patience to remain quiet, like the simplest of his subjects, during the time necessary for taking his portrait." The italics are my own.

Such straws show the direction, and in some sort give the measure of rapidity, of the great current of public opinion which has swept over Europe within the last century. I believe it would now be almost impossible to find a writer to whom it would not be obvious that the words, "a great monarch *only ten years old*," involve an absurdity. Our standard of greatness, although still low enough, has certainly changed for the better!

One of Rosalba's earliest sitters in Paris was Law. She subsequently took the portraits of his wife, his son, and his daughter. In addition to the acquaintance she had made with Law in Venice, there was another link between him and the Carrera family at this time. Antonio Pellegrini had been commissioned by Law, in his quality of Contrôleur-Général des Finances, to paint the ceiling of a large saloon in the new bank, in fresco. This bank, called by a declaration of the King "Banque Royale," was the seat of those numerous and various financial operations of which Law was the ruling spirit. It was situated in a portion of the Palais Mazarin, and extended into the Rue Vivienne. Rosalba records that she visited the bank "*and the model*" on the 10th of June, 1720. This phrase Vianelli explains to mean the model, or first design, of Pellegrini's fresco, which was to decorate the great ceiling. It may be stated here that the fresco was executed in a wonderfully short space of time, and in Pellegrini's most dashing manner. The hall in which it was, was called *La Salle du Mississippi*, the origin of the name being that the great Compagnie d'Occident, established for the purpose of promoting the interests of the French colonies in America, joined itself to the Banque Royale, and had its seat in the same building. A description exists of Pellegrini's fresco in this famous Salle du Mississippi, which it would be too prolix to quote entire. But the reader may form some notion of the style of this work of art from the fact that "the principal idea of the painting was to express the different advantages of the Bank in such a manner as to make them set forth *the glory of the King and of Monseigneur the Regent!*" In the centre was the portrait of the King, little Louis XV., supported on one side by Religion, and on the other by a heroic figure representing the Regent. There were, moreover, Genius,

Commerce, Riches, Surety, and Credit ! One wonders whether the latter (which must have been somewhat difficult to personify) was represented under the figure of John Law ! Besides an infinity of other allegorical personages, there crowned the whole a huge Sun, in whose rays was basking a female figure typifying the Provinces of France, tranquilly enjoying the bounty of so serene a luminary ; "that is to say"—I quote *verbatim*—"the sun is the government, which procures for the provinces all the advantages of commerce and peace by the counsels of a minister, filled with light and wisdom !" Alas !

By way of commentary on this fine farrago of Religion and the Regent, and Commerce and Credit, it should be known that swiftly as Pellegrini's brush moved, John Law's rocket-flight was swifter. The financier was ruined, disgraced, and forced to fly from France, before the fresco was quite finished ; and Law, to the ocean of his debts, added the drop or two representing poor Pellegrini's claim for decorating the Salle du Mississippi ! Later debtor and creditor met again in Venice ; and there was a rumour that Law had managed to pay the painter a sum of twenty-five thousand francs. But the facts of the case will never be rightly known now. All that is certain is that Antonio Pellegrini, finding his debtor in Venice, took legal proceedings against him. Probably some compromise was effected. Be this as it may, the affair seems to have ended Rosalba's acquaintance with the family of Law, of whom no further mention is made in her letters or papers.

Our artist's career in Paris was one of uninterrupted success. Neither financial crises nor other national calamities damped the ardour of the aristocracy for portraits in pastel. The number of these which Rosalba executed during the year she passed in France is astonishing. In October, 1720, she was *unanimously* elected a member of the French Academy of Painting : an honour of which she seems to have been very sensible, and which she records in her diary with less parsimony of words than usual. The picture which, in accordance with established custom, she presented to the Academy on her election, represents a muse offering a laurel crown to the Academy of France, and still exists in a saloon of the Louvre. It was not executed, however, until after her return to Venice, and was forwarded to the Academy in 1722.

Rosalba was courted and flattered, not only by the *grandes dames* and *grands seigneurs* of the Court, but by almost every person of note, artistic, literary, or political, who was at that time to be found in Paris. Amongst others, she painted the portrait of the celebrated Watteau. She records in her diary that she was strongly urged to remain in Paris, but the brilliancy of her reception there, although it excited her profound gratitude, could not seduce her into abandoning her own country. Early in the year 1721 she took leave of her

French friends and admirers, and set forth for home. She travelled by way of Strasburg, avoiding the Marseilles route by reason of the fearful pestilence which had recently been raging there. She travelled through Suabia, and then entering the Tyrol, reached Venice from thence in the month of May. Her diary terminates with her sojourn in Paris.

Other honours were in store for her. In 1723 she was sent for to Modena, where she painted the portraits of six princesses of the reigning family, who loaded her with flattering attentions. But in 1730 she reached what her biographer, M. Sensier, calls the apogee of her success. In that year she went to Vienna by the express invitation of the Emperor Charles VI., who desired to have his portrait taken by the famous Venetian. The Canon Vianelli had access to a great number of letters written at this period by Rosalba and Giovanna (who always accompanied her sister) to their mother in Venice. The letters contain accounts of the artist's success at the Court of Vienna, where she executed portraits of the Emperor, the Empress, and the Archduchess, besides a number of other personages. Vianelli says that the correspondence is a "precious testimony to the kindness and attention which Rosalba received in the Austrian capital." But it is a precious testimony to something more—namely, to the simplicity, affection, and love of home, which characterised both the sisters.

They returned to Venice at the close of the year, and Rosalba does not appear to have quitted it again for any lengthened journey. She continued to work with her usual diligence, aided by Giovanna, whose assistance in preparing her first sketches, &c. was invaluable. Rosalba's "little house in Venice," as she designates it, was the rendezvous of Royalties and Highnesses, more or less serene, without end. One German prince after another undertook the journey to Venice expressly to obtain a portrait by her hands, and returned home proud and happy if he succeeded in doing so. The Duke of Mecklenburgh was a frequent visitor at her house, where he amused himself by playing the violin to her accompaniment on the harpsichord. Rosalba was herself no mean musician. She played several instruments—among them the violin,—and sang with much taste and expression.

One of the most marked of Rosalba's Royal patrons was Augustus the Third, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. He became so enthusiastic an admirer of her talent, that he bought up her works at extravagant prices wheresoever he could find them. And the collection in the famous picture-gallery at Dresden attests to this day his zeal in obtaining specimens of her art. It has even been stated that Augustus did not confine his admiration to Rosalba's paintings, but was well inclined to extend his devotion to herself. He corresponded with her,—but so also did several other sovereign

princes,—and a collection of his letters to her certainly existed at one time. They were spoken of as “love letters,” and are now thought to be in Dresden, having been sold in a surreptitious manner. The truth or falsehood of this rumour might be worth ascertaining.

The remainder of the long life of our artist was devoid of any striking incident, although, did time and space “adhere,” there might be many curious details to be recorded of men and manners long since passed away. Rosalba survived her beloved sister Giovanna, whose loss was perhaps the deepest grief of her life. Giovanna’s character appears to have been very beautiful. With rare unselfishness she accepted a place in the shade beside her brilliant sister, in whose success she delighted, and whose labours she unobtrusively, but materially assisted. Although inferior to Rosalba as an artist, Giovanna appears to have been quite her equal in mother-wit. There are extant some sonnets which the sisters wrote one against the other as a playful trial of skill; and in the concluding one of the series (written in the Venetian dialect), Rosalba fairly yields the palm to her younger sister.

There was for a long time a legend current in Venice to the effect that Rosalba lost her reason, as well as her eyesight, before her death. But this is, happily, not true. Her last will and testament, of which a copy *in extenso* is given by Vianelli, suffices to prove that Rosalba’s mind and memory were clear and sound to the last. She left the enjoyment of her fortune to her sister Angela Carriera Pellegrini, (then a widow,) for life, and directed that it should be divided, in proportions which she carefully determines, after Angela’s death, between the families Pedrotti and Penzo, her relatives. She distributed various little *souvenirs* among her friends, and did not omit legacies to faithful servants. She had prepared a purse apart for the expenses of her funeral, which she directed her executors to see did not exceed the sum she had assigned for it.

One touching circumstance must not be omitted; she desired to be buried in the church of San Vito and San Modesto, near to, and if possible in the same tomb with her dearly beloved sister Giovanna. Her request was fulfilled, but the traveller in Venice will vainly seek the last resting-place of the two Carrieras. The church fell entirely into ruins. It has since been restored as far as the exterior is concerned, and it is said that the municipality of Venice intends to reconstruct and replace its broken tombs and monuments.

To sum up, we may own Rosalba Carriera’s life to have been well and honourably filled. Although when once she entered on the path of success she encountered no obstacles such as have hindered the progress and wrung the hearts of greater artists, yet she had to undergo much preliminary toil and to exercise much steady perseverance before she emerged from poverty and obscurity. Her character

was doubtless stronger than her genius. But one is not tempted to expatiate on the exaggerated estimate in which her contemporaries held her talents, because she herself appears always to have preserved a modest opinion of them. That they were considerable, albeit not transcendent, the world has agreed to acknowledge.

Rosalba was subject all her life to fits of hypochondriacal depression; which, however, came at rare intervals. Now and again she records in her diary "A bad day." And this stands for a day of gloom and melancholy. But she seems to have suffered this affliction as she would doubtless have endured any bodily ailment, with a kind of common-sense stoicism, and to have troubled others with it as little as might be. In her old age the far greater misfortune befel her of total blindness. But even this did not cloud the serene light of her intelligence.

She expired in Venice on the 15th day of April, 1757, aged eighty-two, and she left behind her a memory fondly cherished by her friends and dependents, and untarnished by the breath of scandal in an age and country where such immunity was honourable in proportion to its rarity.

## THE DEATH OF ALMACHILD.

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SNOW-WHITE beneath the citron trees

The shining marble couches  
Glassed globe and leaf ; a little breeze  
Was busy in the canopies,  
And tinkled golden ouches  
That held the scarlet to the frieze.

Outstretched at ease, each limb fulfilled  
With sense of sleepy pleasure,  
In idle strength lay Almachild,  
Long, brown, and strong, a god in build,  
A beast in spirit's measure,  
As oxen lie by fields they tilled.

Through lids half-shut he saw the green,  
The red, the white, the yellow,  
He heard the rustle of the screen,  
He saw her stepping down, his queen,  
His bride without a fellow,  
Slow-stepping down with eyes serene.

Dark eyes that entered into his,  
Like-hidden by dark lashes ;  
Through all his body thrilled the bliss  
That, born of sudden loveliness,  
Flames out in greysteas ashes,  
The love that cursed of Heaven is.

And she came round the balcony,  
And she came down the stair,  
All clad in purple royally,  
And crowned with ivy, entered she,  
And all her plum-blue hair  
Rolled round her white neck gloriously.

Upstarted he all stark and glad,  
Bewildered at that seeing,  
He stood like Bacchus mute and mad  
At sight of some much-loved Mænad ;  
A perfect pair in being  
They seemed, as ever earth hath had.

And she came on, and nearer on,  
And kneit beside her master,  
In her raised hands a beaker shone,  
And she, as meek as any nun,  
The while his breath came faster,  
Spoke to the lord her craft had won :

“ Behold, my lord, my life, my sweet !  
How sparkle rising bubbles  
Within this horn ; the noontide heat  
Is heavy on thee, it were meet  
Thy wife should ease thy troubles,  
So, Hebe, come I thee to greet

“ With wine to cherish, spice of Ind  
To warm thee, winter’s storing  
To cool, and waft thy wandering mind  
Back to those hills where native kind  
Still dwell, to rivers pouring  
Through icy vaults sea-life to find.

“ Strong wine, and spice, and store of ice,  
And bride that woos the winning,  
I bring to thee, and nothing nice  
I offer all at thy devise ;  
I was not made for spinning,  
In life of man my living lies ! ”

So raught he out his trembling hands  
To clutch the cup, and linger  
About the shining ivy bands,  
The while his strong life’s golden sands  
Ebbed out through eye and finger,  
Dragged by the tide no moon commands.

He drank, and paused to see his bride,  
No longer lowly kneeling,  
Stand in the shade, as one who spied  
His face, from eyes down-dropped to hide  
The gleam of triumph stealing  
To flushing cheek and lip’s curled pride.

Snow-cold the draught, snow-cold and sweet,  
But all his heart grew colder,  
And all his brain took sudden heat ;  
As mountain cat had lent him feet,  
He gripped her shining shoulder—  
“ Come, turn, my love ! thy lord to greet.

"Enough for me, enough for thee,  
 Is mingled in thy beaker ;  
 Ice for the vine of Lombardy—  
 Fire for the pine of Hungary—  
 And which of twain seems weaker,  
 The murdering vine or murdered tree?"

Then turned she with cold awful eyes,

And shook him off ; she towered  
 Most like some Fate that destinies  
 Had swayed, and knew a Fate arise  
 To quell her, and he cowered,  
 So much her mouth did might despise.

With twofold hands above her head  
 She waved the horn, she kissed it ;  
 She drained the draught, and stilly said,  
 "We twain have lived, and both are dead—  
 There was a life—I missed it !  
 What bitterer can be sung or said ?"

Loud-ringing on the shining floor,  
 Came down the horn of sorrow ;  
 He gazed on her, and, sighing sore,  
 "Oh, love ! the dream of love is o'er,"  
 He said, "we wake to-morrow ;  
 How hast thou squandered all our store !"

So falling, clasped her feet and kissed,  
 And died, and she his passion  
 Nor recked nor pitied, for the mist  
 Rose to her eyes, the fountain hissed  
 In ear ; in queenly fashion  
 She wrapped her, fell, and no man wist.

B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

## MEMOIRS OF A CYNIC.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CONTRASTS."

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### III.

My grandmother was so overwhelmed with grief at the loss of her son, that she resolved on relinquishing our superintendence. Possibly this determination was in part arrived at from the fact that my father had left his elder half-brother executor to his will, as well as our guardian. But little good feeling existed between him and my grandmother, he being the child of my grandfather's first wife, whom she had cordially detested. My uncle was considerably older than my father, at least fourteen or fifteen years. I forget now what employment he held, but I think he was secretary in some office or bank, the business of which was carried on in the ground-floor, while we occupied the whole of the upper portion of the house. My uncle was a reserved, taciturn man, and very undemonstrative. He took personally but little notice of us, leaving us to the care of the housekeeper. If we received too much supervision from my grandmother, we certainly had little enough now. True, my uncle never treated us with any harshness, but seemed totally indifferent to anything connected with us, so long as we did not interfere with his comfort and convenience. He had been a widower for some years, and was childless, which possibly might, to a certain extent, account for the apathy with which he certainly regarded us.

We had no friends of our own age, and indeed the only acquaintance we had was the housekeeper. The locality we lived in was not one which allowed us much opportunity for out-door exercise. Our house was on the Surrey side of Blackfriars Bridge, standing some way apart from the high road, and has since been destroyed for the Blackfriars station of the Dover railway. The principal occupation we had at home was in a library of books (in other respects our education was utterly neglected); our greatest amusement was to go to the theatre, and we were always accompanied on these occasions by the housekeeper, for my uncle took no pleasure in theatrical performances.

Our life during the first six months we lived under my uncle's roof was peculiarly sad. My brother and I used to pass whole hours together in the back drawing-room, amusing ourselves with the books we there found; my uncle being either below in the office, or in some other part of the house. Among the books we especially delighted in were "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Josephus." The former had

particular attractions for us, not only from the poetry of the book, but from the plates with which it was illustrated. Over and over again did my poor brother and I wade through that allegory, and so strong was the impression the book created, that even at the present time I can recall to mind the figures in the plates, as well as the quaint letters in the headings of some of the chapters.

One evening, after having been reading the whole afternoon in our favourite book, my brother and I when we closed it began to talk over the adventures it contained. Of course our favourite characters were Christian and Faithful. We cared little for Mr. Steadfast-in-the-Faith and other amiable personages, and despising with great earnestness Mr. Hold-to-the-World, Mr. Love-the-Flesh, Mrs. Bats'-Eyes, and other objectionable individuals. At last we came to Vanity Fair, and discoursed together for some time on the hubbub produced in it by the strange answer of Christian and Faithful. We began to consider what would be the effect in an English fair if they had passed through it replying to every person who said "What'll you buy ? what'll you buy ?"—"We buy the Truth." There was some difference of opinion between us on the subject, whether they would be ill-treated or otherwise. At last I suggested we should at once try the experiment. True, there was no fair handy, but a short distance from the northern side of the Bridge was old Fleet Market, which a few years afterwards was removed. It was then Saturday evening, the market was at the fullest, and consequently a good opportunity presented itself for the experiment to be tried. My poor brother and I left the house, it being determined that I should assume the part of Christian, and he that of Faithful.

As 'soon as we arrived at the market, we each adopted our characters, regulating our walk at a steady pace, and with a seriousness on our countenances befitting the occasion. "What'll you buy ? what'll you buy ?" was being said on all sides, and each time we heard it we replied, "We buy the Truth." Onwards we went, but so little notice was taken of us that I, at any rate, began to suspect that Christian's statement of the effects produced must have been somewhat exaggerated. At length a circumstance took place which gave us great encouragement. A butcher's man, who was sharpening his knife on the steel as we passed, said, "What'll you buy ? what'll you buy ?" We both answered steadily and solemnly, "We buy the Truth." The man seemed considerably annoyed, and was moving towards us when a customer came up to his stall, so he contented himself with merely calling us a couple of little fools. We were rather vexed at the customer interrupting the affair, but we considered it as hopeful, and went on.

Nothing occurred for a little time, when on passing one of the stalls the same question met our ears, and we returned the same

answer. An infidel greengrocer's-boy then threw a cabbage stump at me, which struck me so violently on the head it nearly knocked me down. Casting aside the meek and gentle character of Christian which I had assumed, I rushed at him, and a desperate fight ensued between us, in which, I must admit, I was far from coming off conqueror; on the contrary, I was very severely punished.

We now returned homewards, my face covered with blood. A singular change had also come over my demeanour. I no longer bought the "Truth," and, in fact, thought nothing more about it, being too much occupied with the blood which was trickling down on my dress, and fearing the animadversions which my uncle might make on the subject. Fortunately the streets of London were at that time by no means so well lighted as they are at present, so we excited very little attention on our road home.

The next day (Sunday), I found my nose was very considerably swollen, and I had also a black eye. Of course it was no use attempting to disguise it from my uncle, so when he asked me how it had occurred, I told him I had had a fight with a boy in Fleet Market the night before, and had got the worst of it. My uncle merely shrugged his shoulders, and the subject dropped. From that time I took a great dislike to "The Pilgrim's Progress," and I remember one afternoon, when my brother proposed we should read it, saying I was tired of it, and knew it all by heart. He gave, however, a shrewd guess at the truth, that it was the result of my fight, and not that I was actuated by any valid objection to the book. He endeavoured to console me, and remarked that on a future occasion I might be better able to keep my temper. I candidly admitted I was unable to support a character of the kind; and that I was sorry for it, but it was no use attempting it again. He argued that possibly mine was an exceptional case; and that in Bunyan's book nothing was said about cabbage stumps in *Vanity Fair*. However, I considered his argument as mere sophistry, and the matter dropped.

Although my uncle appeared to take no interest in the punishment I had received, I very much suspect it induced him to engage another housekeeper who would superintend us better, so that a mischance of the kind might not occur again. At any rate Martha came on duty a short time afterwards.

Our new superintendent was a good-natured, respectable woman, about forty years of age, and a relative of the one whose place she supplied, who was infirm and ill-tempered. Martha was very kind to us, and in our walks (for we were now prohibited to go out alone) she would take us anywhere we liked. As a proof of her good nature I may mention that our favourite walk was to Billingsgate; and it must be understood that Billingsgate presented a very different appearance then to what it does now. Altogether it would be impossible to imagine a more dirty or unattractive promenade. Whether we

crossed the bridge and went by Thames Street or through the dirty slums of Southwark, it was equally objectionable. When we arrived at the locality itself, those accustomed to the present cleanly condition of the place, and the noble buildings around it, could hardly form an opinion of the degraded state it was then in. There was an attribute, however, which in my eyes, redeemed it from all its other objectionable qualities—namely, a smell of tar, perceptible during the whole of the way, strongly suggestive of the sea, which increased in intensity till we reached Billingsgate, forming a fitting prelude to the bustling scene of boats, and the Gravesend and Margate packets, Billingsgate being at that time the embarking port for the latter. And it was here perhaps that I first conceived the strong desire, afterwards gratified, to become a sailor.

It was while under Martha's care that my feelings of romance experienced their first shock. However, unlike my experience of "The Pilgrim's Progress," the catastrophe, so far from curing me of my liking, has made the cause of it dear to me through the whole of my existence, even to the present day. It arose from my belief in the reality of theatrical illusions. At the time I am speaking of, I might have been between eight and nine years of age. Martha had some acquaintance with a person employed at the Surrey Theatre, and through his patronage she occasionally obtained orders for the pit, when my brother and I generally accompanied her.

One piece, which I saw several times, used to make a great impression on me. I forgot the name of it, but it struck me as being exceedingly grand and magnificent, and its attraction rather increased than diminished the oftener I saw it. I even now remember the awe and admiration with which I used to regard the principal performers. One among them was to me an especial object of interest. She was the benevolent power of the piece—a just and magnificent queen. Her virtues, in my eyes, were very possibly increased by her personal appearance. She was a tall, portly, handsome woman, with a sweet clear voice. I remember also that she had a beautiful set of teeth; indeed she would not have been to blame had I forgotten the circumstance, for she took every possible opportunity of showing them to their fullest extent. No matter what sentence she might be giving utterance to, whether tragic or comic, laughing or weeping, jesting or scolding, her teeth were always to be seen. Her dress also contributed greatly to the respect I bore her, it was as magnificent as stage velvet and Dutch metal could make it, and the crown she wore the queen of the Indies might have envied.

The splendour and majesty of this woman fairly haunted me, till at last the illusion vanished. I was walking one fine sunshiny morning with Martha in a poor street at the back of the present Bethlem Hospital, which was then building. We were at the moment passing a row of small four-roomed houses, with little gardens in front,

separated from each other and the road by short, rickety wooden palings. From one of the houses emerged a tall shabbily-dressed old woman, with a basket on her arm. She took the same direction as ourselves, but, as we had not reached her when she left the garden-gate, we of course followed her. Suddenly the door of the same house opened again, and a slatternly, slip-shod, dirty little girl rushed out of it after the old woman, screaming at the top of her voice, "Grandmother, we want butter." The old woman, hearing the child's voice, turned round, and I had a full view of her features. They were perfectly well known to me, but I could not at the moment remember where I had seen them.

"That's Mrs. B——, the queen in the piece you saw last night, at the theatre," Martha whispered to me.

I was thunderstruck. At first I believed it to be impossible; but a second glance at the poverty-struck creature proved it to be a fact. That shabby, sharp-voiced old woman was the mild-toned, magnificent queen of the evening before!

If the foregoing occurrence had not been sufficient to dispel some of my romance respecting theatrical representations, a circumstance afterwards occurred which fully confirmed it. It took place when I was between ten and eleven years of age. My uncle had placed me at a day-school in the neighbourhood, to which I went every morning and returned in the evening. My poor brother had now left me. He was exceedingly unwell, and had been placed under the charge of a respectable woman, a relative of Martha's, who resided at Hastings. I believe the happiest hours of my childhood were passed at that school; not that there was anything particularly attractive in my daily routine, but my life at home was exceedingly monotonous and solitary. At school, at any rate, I had companions; at home I had now none, with the exception of Martha, and a mongrel terrier of the name of Rover. My holidays were particularly desolate, for I had no acquaintances, my uncle not allowing me to receive any of my school-fellows at home; and I had too much pride to visit at the houses of others when I could not offer them any return.

Occasionally, it is true, I still had a treat to the theatre, Martha's acquaintance, of whom I have already spoken, continuing to hold his appointment, although the manager had removed him to the Lyceum Theatre. A piece was being performed there at that time which had great attractions for the public. It was called "The Dog of Montargis; or, The Forest of Bondy." It had such an effect on me that, although some fifty years have passed over my head since I saw it, I think I could now repeat everything which took place in it on the stage. Let me be clearly understood. The human performers in the piece did not possess the charm for me which would have been experienced by most boys of my age, for the broken illusion I have already mentioned had taught me how much deception was before

me. But there was one, in fact the hero of the piece, "The Dog of Montargis" himself, who entirely won my affections. With him there could be no deceit; all was nature there.

Another tie bound me to him: the strong affection I had for my own dog, Rover, the friend and playmate of my solitary hours. Somehow I identified the affection the dog on the stage, a superb Newfoundland, had for his master, with that of my own diminutive terrier. At the same time, the qualities of the "Dog of Montargis" far exceeded those of Rover. This I was obliged to admit, although my affection for my dog by no means diminished from the comparison. The instinct of the former was wonderful, if not miraculous. He appeared to surpass in intelligence all his biped fellow-actors, and the whole audience, from the applause they gave him, seemed to be of the same opinion.

The principal business of the piece rested on him. Returning home with his master through the forest, they were attacked by assassins. After a desperate struggle, in which both the dog and his master showed the greatest courage, the latter fell a victim to his assailants. The dog, finding his master slain, after giving vent to his feelings in a lamentable howl over the dead body, rushed from the stage. The next scene represented a street in Bondy. Although it was night, there was sufficient light on the stage to discern that the houses were arranged in such a manner that the doors of several were plainly seen in perspective. By the side of each door hung conspicuously a bell-handle.

Presently the dog made his appearance. In the darkness of the night the sagacious brute could not at first distinguish his home, and he examined two or three of the doors before he was assured that he was right. He then seized the bell-handle, and rang the bell vigorously. Presently a man-servant, hastily dressed, and with a lantern in his hand, opened the door. The moment he saw the dog he intuitively understood that something was wrong, and both servant and dog rushed across the stage together. It now appears to me he rather led the dog than that the dog led him; but this did not strike me at the time. The grand effect was in the last scene, where the dog appeared as the principal witness in the trial. Although suspicion was strong against the real assassin, he had contrived to get up an *alibi*, which, though his witnesses were disreputable, would, in all probability, have allowed him to escape, and thus frustrate the ends of justice; so on the dog was thrown the *onus* of discovering the truth.

The court was opened; the several accused were placed in a line on one side of the stage; and the judge, officials, and soldiers, were ranged on the other. The dog was then brought in, and he carefully examined the accused. The excitement of the audience at the moment was intense. All seemed breathless with expectation. Sud-

denly the dog sprang on the real villain, seized him by the throat, and dragged him down upon the stage. A terrific burst of applause was the reward the audience gave the intelligent brute for his sagacity and love for his master. The dog's owner, a Frenchman, then came forward and bowed the dog's acknowledgments for the compliment, the intelligent brute the while having his teeth fixed in the murderer's throat, apparently enjoying his vengeance. The Frenchman retired, and the business of the scene went on. The judge admitted the proof of the murderer's guilt, which had been made perfectly clear by the dog's evidence. "The finger of heaven," he said, "was evidently in the whole affair," and he concluded by ordering the villain to immediate execution. This, however, was not so easily performed, for when the soldiers advanced to take him away, it was with great difficulty they could remove the faithful brute from his throat. The young couple, whoever they might have been, for there were a pair of lovers somehow mixed up with the plot, were then and there, without let or hindrance, allowed to marry. They immediately placed themselves in a pious attitude, each with one hand on the head of the dog, the other raised towards the gallery evidently thanking the "gods" for their good fortune; and the curtain fell amidst the warm and unanimous plaudits of the audience.

I think I saw the piece three times, without its in the least palling on the senses. Each night after the performance was to me a sleepless one. It would have been absurd for me to have drawn any comparison between the dog's abilities and Rover's, with an idea of proving an approach to equality, yet my love for my dog burned as brightly as ever. At last I came to the conclusion that possibly Rover possessed as good natural abilities as his Thespian brother, and that education alone made the difference between them. I well knew how great the difference it made between men, and why should not the rule hold good with dogs?

After carefully thinking over the matter, and confirming myself in the idea, I determined, as Rover's natural guardian, to repair, as far as possible, the defects in his education. But an impediment arose at the very outset. Before I could teach Rover any points of canine accomplishments, I must be instructed in the art myself. This I resolved, if possible, to be; and I made Martha the confidante of my resolution. She, of course, could not advise me on the subject; but she promised to consult her theatrical friend. I waited with great anxiety the result of her interview with him, which at last took place.

She informed me that her friend had personally nothing to do with the stage arrangements, he being only a check-taker, but he would tell one of the carpenters, who understood all about it, and was a very good fellow, to call upon me. I waited impatiently for his visit; and at last he came. I laid open to him my wishes, and I told him how

happy I should be if Rover could be taught to be as intelligent and faithful as the dog of Montargis—did he think there was any chance of it—of course under proper instruction ?

“I do,” he said.

“Could you teach him, or instruct me how to teach him ?” I inquired. “The latter I should prefer of the two.”

“If your dog, sir,” he said, “is a dog of ability, he can very easily be taught ; but I hardly think it would be fair on my part to tell you how it is done. It is a sort of professional secret.”

I admired his conscientiousness, but I disagreed with him in his conclusion. I asked him if he had pledged himself to secrecy. He assured me he had not.

“Then what objection can you have ?” I asked. “You abuse no confidence, and disobey no order.”

“That is all very true,” he replied; “but still, I do not see my way.”

He did not say he might not do it, as I, who knew better than he, thought the contrary. He said something about wishing to oblige me ; but that in justice to his conscience, if he gave way out of good feeling for me, he ought at least to have some temptation to form a sort of excuse for his scruples.

I immediately understood him. My available assets at the time consisted of two shillings, and as he appeared a very honourably-disposed fellow, I thought they would go but a short way in calming the pangs of his conscience. I was, however, mistaken, for when I asked him what amount he would charge for each lesson orfeat, he mentioned the moderate price of one shilling. I was delighted with his answer. I could now teach my dog the two most interesting tricks I saw the dog of Montargis perform ; but, before agreeing to pay for them, I thought it would be but prudent if I introduced Rover to him, and obtained from him his candid opinion whether he considered my dog's natural abilities and qualifications sufficient to allow him to profit by the lesson. The carpenter thought it would be advisable, as it would be useless for me to pay for the lessons if the dog could not learn them, especially as “no money returned” was a strict rule in the theatrical profession.

Rover was accordingly introduced, and the carpenter examined him attentively and critically, while I stood by in a state of no little anxiety, waiting for his judgment.

“That dog will do capitally, sir,” he said at last. “I never saw one—leastways judging from his appearance—who could learn faster. What a shame,” he continued, in an under tone, “to starve a poor brute in that manner !”

I felt exceedingly annoyed at the remark, but, as it was a true one, I said nothing. The meanness of my uncle's house-keeping was visible in poor Rover's ribs, all of which might easily be counted. After a moment's silence on both sides, the carpenter said :

"Well, sir, is it a bargain? I am agreeable, if you are."

"It is," I said. "There is the shilling for the first trick."

"Which would you like to know, sir?" asked the man.

"How the dog of Montargis was taught to ring the right bell," I replied.

The carpenter put the shilling into his pocket.

"I will now tell you faithfully, sir, how it was done. I never gets off a bargain. All the bell-pulls in the street is made of wood except the one at his own house, and that's a sausage."

"A what?" I almost screamed.

"A sausage," he replied. "The poor brute knew his own house by the sausage for the bell-pull; and when he catches hold of it, he naturally rings the bell."

"Then I can't teach Rover to ring my bell?" I said.

"Oh yes, you could, sir," said the carpenter, "if you had a sausage tied to the wire; not otherwise. But then I don't know that your servants would much like it, for they would have to answer the door pretty often. There is not a dog within a mile round that wouldn't soon find it out, and have a pull at your bell to tell them his master was murdered."

I was thunderstruck at the information; but there was no help for it—the money was gone.

"I can't tell you anything more, sir, can I?" said the carpenter.

"No, thank you," I answered, in a somewhat melancholy tone.

The carpenter was preparing to leave the room, when the idea struck me that it would be a great satisfaction if Rover could be taught to detect any man that had murdered me (if that melancholy end should ever be my lot), and hand him over to the police. An act of retributive justice by the authorities for a crime of the kind would be cheap at a shilling. Even in a case of common assault, it might be useful if the magistrate would allow the dog's evidence to be taken. And even if a case of the kind had never yet occurred in an English court of law, it might be a precedent which afterwards might be acted upon in a manner most beneficial to the ends of justice.

"Stop one moment," I said to the carpenter. "I should like to know in what way the dog of Montargis was taught to detect the murderer of his master; or was it simply the effect of instinct?"

"Instinct be hanged," said the carpenter. "It was training, nothing but training; and I'll engage to make that dog of yours as well up in the way of doing it in a week as the other, every bit as well."

Without a moment's further hesitation I placed my other shilling in the carpenter's hand. He did not even condescend to thank me for it, but put it at once into his pocket.

"Well, sir, it is done in this way and no other," he said. "The

murderer has always a large piece of dog's meat sewed up in the buzzin of his shirt, and so the dog always knows him in whatever part of the stage he may be, and pins him accordingly."

I stared at the man in utter astonishment.

"But do you mean to say he could not detect him without the dog's meat?" I asked.

"Certainly not, sir," he said. "Dogs is like Christians; they must have something to know a villain by; they can't guess it no more than you. It would lead to all sorts of mischief if they could. No, sir, depend upon it, a poor half-starved brute like your dog would be far more certain to detect your murderer by the dog's meat than by any other means; it's natural to him."

The carpenter then left me. I endeavoured, but with scant success, to consider the increase of respect I had for Rover, on finding his natural abilities not inferior to those of the dog of Montargis, as an equivalent for the two shillings I had paid for my folly.

#### IV.

My life passed at my uncle's in the same melancholy routine for some eighteen months after Martha's arrival. I received neither kindness nor unkindness from him; my relations with him were of a perfectly neutral character. I had nothing for which to be grateful to him, nor had I the slightest reason to object to any treatment I received. When he saw me, which was perhaps once a day, he would address a few words to me in a civil tone, but seemed utterly indifferent to my reply, even, indeed, if he heard it at all. In his housekeeping nothing absolutely necessary for my comfort was wanting, but there was never the slightest superfluity of any kind. So strict was he in household expenses, and so determined that no waste should take place, that at last he positively banished my poor dog Rover. What was the immediate cause of this severe act of his I do not know; but I am half inclined to think that some one had told him of the lessons I had received respecting Rover's education from the stage-carpenter, and my uncle very possibly calculated that if I instructed Rover on the same system, it might have an injurious effect on his larder. Possibly it might have arisen from a pecuniary cause, for about that time the dog-tax must have been first imposed, and thus Rover's existence was brought by the tax-gatherer more directly under the notice of my uncle.

And now occurred to me a really great sorrow, the greatest I had met with since the death of my father. I mentioned in the last chapter that my brother, in consequence of ill health, had been sent to the house of a relative of Martha's, who resided at Hastings. The change of air at first benefited him considerably, and we received most favourable reports of the progress he was making. A change then took place. In consequence of a severe cold he had caught,

medical assistance had to be called in, and, although the symptoms were for a short time ameliorated, he never thoroughly recovered from the shock. At last consumption set in, which ran the usual course,—the reports we received one day raising our hopes, and the next crushing them again to a point below the one they had stood at before receiving the last favourable intelligence. At length he died somewhat suddenly, and I was sent down in company with Martha to attend the funeral. We arrived the evening before the ceremony, and the next morning I was shown my poor brother in his coffin. Even now, by closing my eyes, I can paint the scene as vividly on the retina as the moment it occurred. I can see the pale wax-work look of his countenance, with the calm expression of death on it, as well as the coffin and all the appurtenances in the room. One thing especially deserves mentioning. The woman with whom he had lived had filled the coffin with flowers. It was the custom, she said, in the part of the world she came from, Hampshire, to place flowers in the coffins of children. If this really was the case, it would be singular to trace the source from which this beautiful custom had arisen. To search for its origin would be a curious task, and one, in my opinion, infinitely more attractive than any of the researches into the funereal customs of nations I have ever yet met with.

The funeral over, I returned with Martha to London, where I continued to reside in the same house with my uncle some six months longer. And then, for some reason with which I am not acquainted, the office was closed, and my uncle left the house to reside in a much smaller one in one of the new streets then building in Lambeth. I know not if he lost any money at the time, but I remember he was exceedingly low-spirited, and that, moderate as had been his house-keeping before, he now reduced it considerably. Nay, more, he even dismissed Martha, and sent me to a cheap boarding-school in the country. As a rule, my time here did not pass uncomfortably. There were a great many boys, so that I had plenty of amusement. The progress I made in my studies would hardly, in the present day, be called satisfactory, though this is not to be wondered at, as we had but one master to every forty scholars.

At the termination of the first half-year I received a note from my uncle, informing me that I was not to return for the holidays, but that he had made arrangements for me to reside during the time with the schoolmaster. This arrangement I had no objection to, especially as during the vacation we had no lessons to learn, and several other pupils also remained at school, principally those whose parents were abroad, many of them living in India.

Another six months passed on, and it was again arranged for me to spend my holidays at school. I was even more satisfied with the arrangement than on the former occasion. It was then Christmas, and we were all to a considerable extent confined to the house ; now,

on the contrary, it was summer, and the weather beautiful, and the three or four companions who remained with me were nice, intelligent, gentlemanly lads, and we used to amuse ourselves in the fields and country around, without any supervision of the masters, during the whole of the day. And now first occurred to me a proof of the old proverb, that "When the devil finds a man idle, he generally puts a job into his hands." It was so in my case. I don't know whether it was from the beauty of the weather, or what could have been the cause of it, but it was now that I felt my first experience of the tender passion. I managed in some manner to fall desperately in love with a little girl about my own age, the daughter of the matron of the workhouse, and a very stiff, prim, severe woman she was. How her daughter first came under my notice I know not. Certainly it was not in the general manner these affections start up in the breasts of schoolboys, by first seeing the beloved object in church, for her mother was a rigid dissenter, and we, of course, from our more genteel position in society, attended the parish church. I never spoke one word to her in my life; but it was no matter, my affection for her surpassed the bounds of reason. My love grew so strong, I could conceal it no longer, and I determined to address her. But how? To speak to her was impossible, as of course I could not get a moment with her by myself. At last I consulted my great crony at school, an Indian boy, what steps he would advise me to take.

"Write to her," he said. "Nothing has so fine an effect on the mind of a girl as a well-written letter."

I should here mention that he had gained the prize for penmanship and English composition during the last half year.

I determined to adopt his advice, and we sat down together to concoct the letter. It is only justice to him to state that he was far more fluent in the matter than I was, although I was to receive the whole credit of the production. It was certainly a beautiful piece of composition, and had a great effect on me. One sentence is still fresh in my memory. It ran thus:—"When through the guardian watchfulness of friends, the sweet employ of epistolary converse is destroyed, still shall the beauty of that form, and enchantments of that mind, remain impressed on my susceptible heart."

Altogether the letter was a master-piece. "If she can resist that," I said, as I folded it up, "she must be more than mortal."

I had now to find a messenger. That was a work of little difficulty, for the shoe-boy of the school, I knew perfectly well, would run any risk in my behalf, provided I remunerated him for the danger he incurred. He did so in the present instance; and for the sum of threepence, my week's pocket-money, he agreed to take the letter, as well as find the means of placing it in her hands. It was the afternoon when he started on his mission, and it was dark night before he returned home, I anxiously expecting him the while.

When he arrived, he told me he had been completely successful, and had induced a pauper nurse with whom he was acquainted to put the letter on my love's pillow, where she would be sure to find it when she went to bed. I must say I felt somewhat annoyed that he had not brought back an answer with him, so that I might judge what my fate would be. However, there was no help for it, and as I knew I could not receive any answer before the next day, I went to my own bed, and, after some hours, fell asleep. My anxiety the next morning about the fate of the letter was so great, that I was unable to eat any breakfast, a fact which the master did not notice, and it is more than probable he would have felt but little interest in it had he done so. Breakfast being over, I tried to amuse myself in the playground, and while away the time as best I could ; but it was impossible, and I anxiously watched every ring at the bell, hoping it would bring me some message from my beloved. No such good fortune, however, attended me, till about two hours after dinner, when I was told that the head master wanted me in the parlour. Somewhat puzzled to know what he could want with me, I hastened into the room, and there, to my surprise, I not only found him,—holding in one hand an open letter, and in the other a cane,—but the matron of the workhouse and her daughter as well.

I was so puzzled and bewildered at the sight, that my heart fluttered audibly, and I remained breathless in presence of the three. It was but a short time however, for the master, still holding the letter in his hand, asked me if I were the author of it. I boldly replied that I was, and then gave a glance at my loved one to see the effect my answer had made on her. It was far from encouraging. There was a stern, chaste expression on her countenance which chilled me to the marrow ; while on that of her mother was a frown so ominous that the boldest female pauper in the workhouse would have trembled beneath it.

"Did any one assist you in writing this letter?" inquired the master.

"I refuse to answer your question," I replied. "I acknowledge myself to blame in the matter, and that is sufficient for you."

"I admit it," said the master, and seizing me by the collar he immediately commenced giving me a most severe caning.

I took my punishment manfully, nor did I utter a single cry during the whole of the time. I am not altogether certain that I even felt the blows, so painful to my mind was the derogatory position I was in, and that too in the presence of the object of my affections, who calmly stood by without even an expression of sympathy on her countenance. When the master had finished the punishment, he thrust me out of the room, telling me I was "a young reprobate." I turned round with the intention of telling him the statement was false, and that my intentions were pure and honourable, when a glance at the countenance of the young lady stopped me, so strongly

was the expression of contempt marked on it. To say the truth I was afterwards not altogether sorry for it, as it completely erased in my breast all esteem and affection for her, and instead of the amiable, lovely creature I imagined her to be, my last reminiscence of her was that of a disagreeable little vixen.

The punishment I had received, however, made a most painful impression on me. I now cared nothing more for the damsel, but the remembrance of the disgraceful treatment I had received in her presence galled me almost to madness. I determined to remain no longer at school, and wrote to my uncle candidly, telling him the whole of the circumstances of the case, and requesting he would remove me. He wrote back a reply, ordering me to stay where I was. A fortnight afterwards, as soon as my pocket-money was sufficient to pay the postage, I sent him another letter, saying, that if he did not remove me at once, I would run away and get the captain of some ship to take me as cabin-boy. This letter had the desired effect. My uncle came down himself to the school two days afterwards, and having paid the bill, without any animadversion or blame, took me back to London with him, and without saying, I believe, half-a-dozen words on the way. During the next few days I remained at his house, but as we only met at meal-times, little conversation passed between us. He did not appear at all angry with me, nor did he make any remarks respecting my behaviour, but seemed simply to ignore my presence.

This routine continued for about a week, when my uncle informed me he intended to send me to a school at Clapham, one of a much better description than that I had just left. All the pupils were sons of gentlemen of fortune or professional men, whereas at the other school there was a great mixture of classes. At this school I remained till I was past sixteen, and I lived there all the year round, holidays as well. I think during the whole of the time I did not see my uncle more than twice. I had a more liberal supply of pocket-money, and the comforts of the school were in every degree vastly superior to the one I had lately left. During the time I was at Clapham I suffered another attack of the tender passion, but this time of a totally different description to the last. Instead of falling in love with a girl as young as myself (I may here add that since my adventure with the daughter of the matron of the workhouse I cordially detested all little girls), the present object of my affections had been fifty, but how many years before it would be difficult to say. She occupied the honourable position of laundry-maid to the establishment, and with her I fell desperately in love. It would be base flattery to say she was handsome ; on the contrary, beyond a good-natured expression of countenance, there was but one attraction about her ; but that, in my eyes, compensated for any other defects, assuming there to have been any—she was much older than myself.

I seemed to hold it as a chivalrous feat to captivate the affections of a woman so much my senior ; it made me feel more manly, and more on an equality with her. I will not exactly say she encouraged me, for that might be doing her an injustice ; but certainly she did not discourage my attentions, and received graciously the buns and other delicacies I purchased for her. If, however, I became at all too demonstrative, she used to threaten to tell the Doctor, but, to do her justice, she never kept her word. This innocent flirtation continued till I left school, when, on parting with her in the laundry, I clasped her in my arms and kissed her affectionately. The tears came into her eyes, and I thought I had offended her, so I begged her pardon and wished her good-bye, telling her she would ever be dear to me, to which she made no reply.

For some weeks after I left school I resided with my uncle, who allowed me to do exactly as I liked. The principal portion of each day I spent with a school-fellow who had left school about twelve months before, and lived in the neighbourhood of the East India Docks, and whose father held some lucrative appointment connected with the shipping, but of what description I am unable to say. Certain it is that I there acquired my love for a sea life. I used, in company with my friend, to visit the officers of the different East-Indiamen which were then in the Docks. My mind became excited with the different adventures they had passed through, and the very great men they considered themselves when once to the eastward of the Cape of Good Hope. It must be remembered, however, that in those days the captains of the East India Company's ships, especially those engaged in the China trade, held a very different position in the minds of the public from what they do at present, though I had afterwards good reason to know that the superiority they claimed, was due rather to the exclusive power possessed by the Company's charter, than to any real merits on their part as seamen, officers, or gentlemen. However, the different narratives I heard inspired me with an intense love for a sailor's life, and I determined to become one. I now attempted to summon up courage to speak to my uncle on the subject, but he saved me the trouble by one morning asking me if I had formed any idea what profession or business I should like to enter.

"It is quite time," he continued, "that you should entertain the matter seriously."

"Well, uncle," I replied, "I should, if possible, like to get an appointment as midshipman in the Honourable East India Company's service."

"As far as I am concerned I have not the least objection to your entering the East India Company's service ; the only impediment I see in your way is that I have not the slightest interest with any one who could obtain for you an appointment of the kind. Don't you

think the navy would suit you better? I am distantly acquainted with some who are in authority there; and might possibly be able to advance your interests with them."

"Thank you, uncle," I said, "but had it been a time of war I should have preferred it; in peace, there is so little doing in the navy it would not have the same attraction for me as the East India Company's service, where I should be continually moving about, and seeing a great deal of the manners and customs of foreign nations."

My uncle made a slight grimace, evidently at the idea of the amount of information I should receive as to the manners and customs of other nations. He said nothing on the point, however, and merely reminded me again that he had no interest in the service.

I asked if he had any objection to my applying to my friend Burton on the subject. "His father," I said, "knows a good many of the captains of the East Indiamen, and as he has shown me a great deal of attention, I think it very probable he might obtain an appointment for me."

"Ask him if you please," said my uncle, yawning, "and when you have his answer, let me know the result."

I promised I would do so, and the conversation dropped.

*(To be continued.)*

## "DIANE DE LYS" AT THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE.

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In a recent paper in this magazine, an accomplished lady-contributor divided the visitors to the theatre (as it now exists) into certain classes, but her classification, though good, was not perhaps exhaustive. I say, perhaps, because it may be the case that I am one absolutely solitary instance ; but probably there is after all a class of persons, however small, who sometimes go to the theatre, as I have often done, for sheer distraction: in order to put a solid barrier of vivid sensuous impressions between two different kinds of labour ; in order to get thoroughly tired out and force the sleep that otherwise will not come ; in order to get a good sound horse-laugh out of some broad bit of farce ; or for all these purposes put together. It was, however, a feeling of genuine artistic curiosity that took me the other night to the Princess's Theatre to see the acting of Madlle. Desclée in the *Diane de Lys* of Alexandre Dumas, of *Dame aux Camélias* and *Tue-la !* celebrity—a fellow whom I so thoroughly detest, that nothing but a strong motive would ever have taken me to witness any piece the text of which came from his brutal paws. Madlle. Desclée charmed me so much, that I went a second time to see the same piece when performed for the lady's benefit. There was a crowded house, and the Prince and Princess of Wales, with another prince, and, I believe, another princess, were present. The Heir-apparent applauded heartily, and the lovers of paradox were at liberty to enjoy the puzzle that was thus put before them. The Lord Chamberlain at first interdicts a play because it is immoral. The Lord Chamberlain then withdraws the interdiction, although the grounds upon which a play is shut out ought, one would say, to be so clear that no decision could ever bear a revision. And then the younger members of the Royal Family of England go to witness the piece. Lord Sydney acted in this case as keeper of the consciences of a great many English youths and girls besides ; for the audience was very miscellaneous, and included young ladies of bread-and-butter age come to pick up ideas about French manners and accent. If you ask me whether they got good or harm, I answer, Neither in any appreciable degree. Critics write about English young ladies as if they never read anything. But does the intelligent middle-class Englishman as a rule lock up his Bohn's Libraries ? Are there no perfectly pure young ladies who have read Wilhelm Meister, the Elective Affinities, or Chatterton, or Sterne's Sentimental Journey, and even dipped for a minute into Boccaccio's Decameron ? Candidly,

I am quite sure these things are chips in porridge. Somebody must know them ; and to go out of the way to hide them up is idle stupidity.

Those who have happened to read many pages of mine know well that I think the Lord Chamberlain a mediæval absurdity, with a function that cannot be justified by any sane political philosophy. But it does not follow that we should be hard upon him. So long as he has to exercise that function, let us recognize its difficulty. He has to be guided not only by his own ideas of what is right but by other people's, since what is allowable as a question of “public morals” (—I put the phrase in commas as a mark of contempt, not believing in anything of the kind—) is very largely a question of the *impression* certain things make under given conditions of use and wont. And here any such officer as Lord Sydney has, and must always have, a most difficult part to play—indeed an impossible part, and one which may be taken as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole thing. While he is there he must do his best ; but how ludicrously persons differ in their notions of what is moral in its effect, what is modest, and what is “proper,” any intelligent and candid person who will think a little must know. I was present when Mr. W. Bodham Donne, the accomplished and highly intelligent Examiner of Plays, was examined before the Theatrical Committee of 1866 ; and the questions that man had to answer were enough to pose a college of Seraphic Doctors, instructed by Aldrich himself. The tax-gatherer uncle in Nicholas Nickleby—I forget his name—asks Nicholas, “Pray, sir, do you consider the French a *cheerful* language ?” and just such a question did Lord Eustace Cecil put to Mr. Donne. I can see him now, cocking his head, like my magpie, as he let off this droll pistol-shot : “Do you consider the story of *Faust* a moral story ?” Mr. Donne looked down his nose, and after a slight pause, and with a *nuance* of surprise in his accent, said, “The—ah—story of *Faust* is—ah—a *world* story.” What else could he say ? To another similar question, the exact terms of which I forget, the same ingenious gentleman replied : “The morality of the stage is—ah—is the morality of the stage.” The reader whispers with Dogberry, “A marvellous witty fellow !” and the reader is right. I do not think stage managers or others concerned would get much change out of Lord Sydney’s department if Mr. Donne did all the work.

The opinions I have to give are those of a perfectly “emancipated,” and, I hope, a perfectly candid person ; who is bound to no “line” of criticism ; who cares nothing for producing a “sensation” by “pitching into” anything ; who has, in fact, not the faintest shadow of inclination to write up to any particular view of the subject, moral, literary, or dramatic.

Rose Chéry, the predecessor of Madlle. Desclée in the part of the Diane de Lys, I never saw ; with Madlle. Desclée I was inexpressibly

charmed, but a degree of coarseness in her laugh, and her want of intensity, sometimes broke the spell of her otherwise perfect acting. It must, however, be borne in mind, in justice to her, that I am ignorant of French manners except so far as I infer or "realise" them, and that I have no means of comparing her with any other actress in such a part. I tried in vain to conceive Mrs. Stirling, or Miss Terry (now Mrs. Lewis), or Miss Wilton as Diane de Lys. There is no modern English play of any such order,—I think we may say no English play of any age that resembles this French comedy, in its mixture of bastard earnestness and bastard levity. In judging, however, of its cynicism, which is extreme, and what to English eyes and ears is its indelicacy, we must not fail to place ourselves at the French point of view,—remembering, as we do so, that we are not necessarily lowering any moral standard of our own. Much depends upon the suggestiveness both of language and incident, and that is matter of use. This can be brought home to us in a moment. The words birth, death, marriage, convey as much information as a chapter on physiology, but the most modest young lady does not hesitate to use them. And when we find a young painter closeted with a countess for the first time, suddenly hidden away in her chamber to avoid a scandal, and then telling her, in a neat moral lecture, on being let out, that the world will be sure to maintain "qu'un homme caché le nuit dans la chambre d'une femme a bien des droits sur cette femme," we must remember that the words do not to a French ear carry the force they would carry to an English ear. One instance may serve for a hundred. It may very well be contended that the Lord Chamberlain every day licenses plays that are as immoral as *Diane de Lys*, though very different in character. I know of one very successful piece that I consider quite as cynical. But no modern English play puts certain situations so openly before the footlights as *Diane de Lys* does. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu puts the central situation into verse with her usual frankness:—

" Has love no pleasures free from guilt or fear ?  
Pleasures less fierce, more lasting, more sincere ?  
Thus let us gently kiss and fondly gaze,  
Love is a child, and like a child he plays.  
O Strephon, if you would continue just,  
If love be something more . . . . ."

She paus'd, and fix'd her eyes upon her fan !  
He took a pinch of snuff, and thus began :  
" Madam, if love——" but he could say no more,  
For mademoiselle came rapping at the door.  
The dangerous moments no adieu afford ;  
" Begone," she cries, " I'm sure I hear my lord."  
The lover starts from his unfinish'd loves,  
To snatch his hat, and seek his scatter'd gloves :

The sighing dame to meet her dear prepares,  
While Strephon, cursing, slips down the back-stairs.

But the loves of this Strephon and Chloe are wanting in the kind of elevation that belongs to those of Madame la Comtesse de Lys and the poor painter Paul Aubry; and they are introduced only to be made game of. In *Diane de Lys*, all the petty intrigue of the story is acted out under your eyes; the persons concerned tell lies on the instant with the most gracious facility; and the lovers do their courting in your presence. In England, when matters of this sort are just grazed by the dialogue or the action, it is usually in such a way that the "lover" is made ridiculous. True, the moral spirit of the thing is sure to be conventional—it is to the German stage that we must look for a little occasional simplicity and sincerity—but when Benedick for instance epilogues that "there is no staff more reverend than one tipp'd with horn," are there five husbands in an audience of as many thousands of persons who are made uneasy?

The story of *Diane de Lys* is something very different indeed from what is usual in English plays of temptation. In France, whatever may be said, and with much truth, about the interior domestic life of the people, it is certain, unless their whole literature lies, that the sentiment of conjugal fidelity is not as general as it is in our own country. We find this not only in the literature of intrigue and persiflage, but in writings that have an avowed ethical purpose. Take the "*L'Amour*" of M. Michelet. "*Resserrer le foyer*" is the motto of the book, and its whole object is to glorify marriage. Yet what do we find? That the wife will be tempted comes as quite a natural assumption, and there are one or two chapters devoted to the regimen which the husband is to apply in case the spider gets the fly into the web. He is to treat her kindly; he is to take her away from the scene of action; he is to handle her as an almost irresponsible being; in case of need he is to apply a slight personal chastisement—a subject which is dealt with in terms truly ludicrous. On the other hand it is almost as certainly assumed that "*la begueulerie des femmes*" must, after a few years of marriage, send the husband from home to "*la dame entretienne*." And what have we in *Diane de Lys*? I have not read the novel, but the play was, as Mr. Carlyle says, "thus and not otherwise." A charming girl—an heiress—bred in a convent school, marries at about eighteen, a man of five-and-thirty, who is up to his neck in public business, but who continues after his marriage "*sa vie de garçon*." We gather that he is not faithful to his wife, though he treats her as a gentleman should, and allows her to spend her own money pretty much as she pleases. As to the company the lady keeps at home, M. le Comte is not quite as indifferent as the shopkeeper in Sterne, but he is nearly. "Monsieur is so good," says the wife, "as to give

himself the trouble of feeling my pulse." The husband lifts his hat, and goes out, saying, "Monsieur does me too much honour." M. le Comte de Lys has, however, a sister, a certain Marquise, who keeps a sharp watch over his wife, and repeats to him from time to time anything noticeable in her conduct. The young countess, leading a tame and "neglected" life, is easily tempted into any small excitement, and the number of "amants," or rather possible "amants,"—pretenders to her love,—is incredible. The words "amour" and "amant" are bandied about like marbles in the dialogue of the piece. At last a certain "*étourdi*" (though he is not, I think called by that name, and is more than "*étourdi*") who had courted her when she was at school, writes and asks her to meet him one evening at a certain place. This is the "*atelier*" of a young painter,—of course. The lady has herself "a taste,"—"elle est artiste, spirituelle"—and, in company with a lady friend, she goes and sees her old lover. Him she gaily puts aside; but he, fond of mischief, and an amateur in "spooning," must needs introduce her to the young artiste,—"*ce Paul Aubry*." The rest is simple. In less than half no time, it is, "Sachez que je n'ai jamais aimé que vous!" It is all within bounds; the story goes no further, so far as I can make out, than the final episode in Mr. Froude's "*Nemesis of Faith*" (which comes handy to my pen because I have just read it for the first time in my life); but society takes alarm. Diane sets her back up, and takes "*ce jeune artiste*" boldly under her wing. Hence, scandals, complications, jealousies, and the one good thing said in the whole play,—which is to the effect that society will never forgive you for a great joy which makes you shun "company." However, the terrible Marquise alarms her brother. M. le Comte dashes upon the scene, and insists upon carrying the lady off from Paris in a way which, all things considered, is an outrage. "*Ce pauvre Paul Aubry*" has clearly whatever rights over Diane de Lys a sincere attachment can give him; but the Count has clearly none. He is a polite ruffian accidentally chained to a woman who is ten times too good for him; and when, having discovered that his young wife can excite other men to earnest passion, he returns from his diplomacy and his dissipation to offer his "love," he is, at least, as great a criminal as "*ce Paul Aubry*"—I mean, measured by any standard whatever; my own standard I decline to bring into court. Well, there is a scandal, and "*un éloignement*," during which "*ce Paul Aubry*" is, of course, very bad; according to the usual formula, "*il est souffrant*." M. le Comte, having once surprised him with his wife—and *after* this, the high-minded husband goes on making love to her!—tells him he shall not descend to notice him, except by means of a pistol shot, the next time he catches him with poor Diane. "*Ce Paul Aubry*" runs after him everywhere in order to provoke him to a duel; but the "bloated aristocrat" declines to recognise him until the hour has struck. With-

out much trouble he tracks him to his wife's company, and then shoots him on the very coolest *Tue-le* principles. "Ce Paul Aubry" dies game, and it appears that he really loves Diane, and she him. "Vivant, à moi, mort, à ma mémoire!" says he (I have not the play before me), and she falls fainting on his corpse when he falls. In answer to the inquiries of sudden visitors, the Count explains the situation very simply: "C'est que cet homme était l'amant de ma femme et que je l'ai tué."—Curtain.

Among the minor characters of the play is a sort of inferior Warrington, who is pretty well sketched and was well acted. One or two other parts were also well filled—but it was difficult to make much of such an empty piece of work. Take out Rose Chéry, or Mademoiselle Desclée, and there was nothing worth crossing the road for. The writing does not contain one notable stroke of wit or humour; or one original line of writing that deserves notice. The first scene, in which two ladies ransack a young painter's studio and turn out the boots and gloves of the "model" Aurore, and read the painter's love-letters, (at least Diane does, much rebuked by her married friend, Marceline,) may have been original in conception; it was certainly amusing. But in order to be effective, the moral pitch of such a story must be much higher or much lower. As it is, you neither laugh nor cry, and you feel something like contempt for the whole lot when the curtain falls. Their facility in lying—even the good Marceline lies, though it is for "virtue"—is something marvellous. "Voila un noble cœur!" exclaims Diane, after her first interview with Paul Aubrey—but in the next scene or near it, this noble young man is playing tricks of petty deception worthy of a naughty school-boy.

On the whole, in spite of the fuss made about this piece between the Lord Chamberlain and the press, it is perfectly fair to say that it was a mere chip in porridge, and that the fact of the fuss points to only two things which are of much importance to us English:—the unworkableness of Lord Sydney's function; and the insincerity and inconsequence of English public opinion in questions of morals. The facility with which it gets upon its high horse—winking all the while at the Sons of Belial behind—is no new topic of mine, but it would be silly to waste powder and shot upon it now. I fear this is rather a flippant little sketch; but the accent of scorn will intrude when I speak of such stuff at all.

MATTHEW BROWNE.

## MR. CARINGTON.

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### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### CONSTERNATION IN TWO CITIES.

*Astrologos.* One city we call Genesis, one Exodus :  
There is a city we call Deuteronomy.

*Raphael.* That's Edinboro' : tell me which the others are.

*Astrologos.* The town of thoughts strong birth . . . the town of exodusess.  
*The Comedy of Dreams.*

ENTERED the Earl of Delamere to the Diana Chamber, looking as young as if he had dropt a half-century somewhere in the corridor, and cared too little about it to offer a reward for its recovery. Men there are who, to use the Scripture phrase, renew their youth like eagles ; and here in his wild Lakeland eyry, held by many a strong, swift ancestor, the eagle spirit became visible in Delamere. The long fogginess of London life was blown away by these wild winds of the fells ; the mountains and meres reclaimed him from the clubs and hells ; no longer was he the London gamester and dandy, but Delamere of Delamere.

To the Marchesa Ravioli Delamere was polite in that fine old-fashioned style which has almost perished in the presence of modern freedom and ease. I must, for my poor part, vote for the continuance of homage from man to woman ; it is the natural deference of strength to beauty, of daring to purity, of glory to gaiety, of life to love. There is no creature more contemptible than the fellow who is rude to a woman. Mind, it is quite clear that a man's duty is to control his wife, and to keep his daughters in good order, by such physical and mental methods as he can command ; but it is also his duty, and will (if he is not a fool) be his pleasure, to treat with chivalrous courtesy the smallest doll in petticoats, thereby teaching her that she is born a lady. Never too soon can a girl be taught that she is a lady, or a boy a gentleman : teach them to obey, by all means, but teach them to respect themselves. Courtesy, chivalry, charity . . . that is my triad. When the trinity of human existence is perfect, these three are one.

"I am delighted to meet you," said the Earl to the piquant little Ravioli, who had risen from her sofa in honour of the mansion's master ; "Carington has described you as the loveliest woman in Europe, and I have never known Carington, as to the charm of

ladies, make a mistake. I would trust him to choose me a wife, if I wanted one."

"Thank you for your confidence," said Mr. Carington, "but I would much rather not attempt it. A man who has never found a wife for himself can hardly be expected to help a friend in such a ticklish business."

"You will remain here as long as you please," said the Earl to the Ravioli, with whose pretty piquant style he was quite in love already. "Carington will see you are comfortable. I am a dull, old invalid, and shall ask to be admitted now and then only."

"Now you remind me," said Raffaella, "of a strange old song I learned in my youth, the work of a troubadour or minnesinger. I think they said it was Walter of the Bird-Meadow."

"Sing your old song, Raffaella," said Mr. Carington; "here is a piano."

She sat, a tiny thing in white, at the piano of satin-wood. Her pretty little fingers seemed only to tremble on the keys, just bribing the wires to say sweet things at a touch. The song . . . a kind of fairy contralto—

"The eagle said, 'I am old ;'  
Said the tomtit, 'I'm older than you'—  
A ball of green and gold,  
That had counted summers two.  
  
"And the jackdaw said, from his perch,  
A pulpit of gray old stone,  
'Twas I first founded the Church :  
Leave questions of age alone.  
  
"And the raven came with a croak,  
A mixture of humour and woe,  
And claimed the Druids' oak  
And the magical mistletoe.  
  
"But the eagle, far withdrawn,  
Remembered old royal words,  
When on Eden's sun-touched lawn  
God said, 'Let us make the birds.'  
  
"And away into æther rare,  
And close to the sun's fierce gold,  
Rose the king of the kings of the air,  
Crying, 'Ay, I am young ! I am old.'"

"Where in the world do you get those versicles, Raffaella?" asked Mr. Carington. "You don't make them yourself, I'll swear, for you are much too silly a child."

"Polite, sir," says the Marchesa, with a courtesy whose dignity is in inverse proportion to her size, "do you really want to know our poet? He lives in a garret on about twopence a day. Take him out of his garret, and give him a thousand a year; and, O dear me! what nonsense he will write."

Elinor, who all this time had been silent, and who had an absurd respect for poets, not usual with young ladies, said : "Then must poets be miserable to make other people happy ? How cruel ! If I were rich, and knew the writer of a song like that you have sung, Marchesa, I would send him something unknown."

"Could a gentleman accept it ?" said the Earl.

"Could a gentleman refuse it ?" echoed Elinor. "Do you mean to say that if a poet gives me pleasure which will last my life, I may not give him some slight pleasure in return ? I would loyally kiss the man who sang me a lovely song, if he would condescend to let my lips touch him."

"We've a quaint old manuscript in our library," said the Earl, "called *The Triads of Delamere*. One is something like this :—

A lady may kiss a wild bird's wing ;  
A lady may kiss the hand of a King ;  
But the mouth of a poet's the sweetest thing.'"

"I should very much like to look through those *Triads*," said Mr. Carington.

"There they are ; Lucy can find them for you ; they are on a choice shelf in the little library, and are bound in vellum, stamped with the Delamere arms. Here's another :—

Many fools without many fears ;  
Many lives without many years ;  
That is the fate of the Delameres."

"Capital," said Mr. Carington. "I must look up Lucy, the librarian, and get a sight of the book. I'd give a trifle to meet the man who wrote it. Have you another in your memory ?"

"Only one, which struck me as a fine rebuke of hypocrisy. It is double, by the way :—

If true is true, no priest needs prayer ;  
If brave is brave, no knight need swear ;  
If chaste is chaste, let maids go bare.  
  
If true is false, then pray, priest, pray :  
If brave is coward, run, knight, away ;  
If chaste is harlot, maid, dress gay."

"Ah !" remarked Mr. Carington, "the old rhyme suits our own time only too well. Still, we are not worn out. The ancient temper of the English sword will not be spoilt by just a little rust. I think that I could find a priest or two whom Jeremy Taylor would have heartily loved. I think that I could find a knight or two worthy to ride by Philip Sidney's side. I think that I could find a girl or two as beautiful as any Shakespeare sketched. What do you think of it, Delamere ? You are the knight, and Elinor's the girl, and luckily the priest is somewhere else."

Certain persons in the City of Genesis were greatly puzzled and alarmed by the evanishment of Number Two. Gone ! no trace left. Despatches and letters untouched. How many people were awaiting the orders of this little woman wrapt in white fur, whom Mr. Carington had as coolly carried away as if she were a baby ? But Frank Carington was imperturbable. He would have packed the Pope or the Sultan into a cab and taken him to Colney Hatch with quiet gravity. No other man in Europe would have dared to do this thing, knowing all its consequences ; and no other man in Europe could have made the Ravioli obey him. It was a curious mixture of chance and character. This girl had been a child in his arms; he had the strongest will in Christendom. The man who compares humanity with the material universe may find innumerable difficulties. Sometimes you meet a girl who is a diamond ; sometimes a man who is gold. Mr. Carington was true steel—"the ice-brook's temper." Still, something more there was in him ; the majestic influence which caused him to constrain obedience from many who did not at all like obeying.

The Ravioli's disappearance, leaving no trace, amazed and appalled a good many people. Break one link, and where is your chain ? After Number Two, the chief Silent Sister in this unfortunate metropolis was Number Six ; she, in addition to her private annoyances, found herself in a position of strange perplexity. It was simply this. She had no orders. She waited at home in Brook Street. She grew troubled and terrified. She had reached that mental state which belongs to most persons who, abjuring their own independence, consent to become links in a chain ; so, when nobody knew anything, and she was left utterly to her own devices, she was wholly perplexed. There was no one from whom to take take orders. She had played a sufficiently abominable part when Mr. Carington had seen her. She dared not refuse any order, howsoever hideous, that reached her through her superiors. She was at this moment isolated, and all because that one serious link had been severed by Frank Carington's promptitude and daring.

Ah, but the City of Exodus was most amazed when the news in some mysterious way reached Pantile Palace that there was no Ravioli. Ravioli had been a necessity ; for so long a time had suggested, defended, fascinated. Those who desire to know what was the exact limit of the Ravioli's political action, had better ask the well-informed and ably-inspired and curiously eloquent correspondent of that famous journal which broke down over Lily Page. In those regions of Fleet Street journalism, there was a dim notion that the Marchesa Ravioli was somebody, somehow. Could they only have found out who and what she was, they might have made a magnificent harvest.

The Lord of the City of Exodus was deeply troubled when told by his confidential friend that Number Two was not to be found. There

was a shudder through him as, in the Babylon which he had built, he felt the keen touch of outside influence. Against a great idea, your Babylon or Rome has no more strength than a city of cards. Idea reigns : it is the writ of God. The poor devil of an Emperor shivers to his heart's core when the happy thought of a writer or speaker touches him in the weakest point of his manufactured armour.

It would be quite absurd on my part to assert that any small European nation was ruled by a man who had no right to rule, whose chief qualities for usurpation were shyness and cowardice, who was a crowned conspirator. The annals of the world happily mention no such person, so that this narrative merely deals with what might have been if the tide of purity and patriotism had not risen high enough to swamp all the rascals about, without question of political or personal legitimacy. It was probably Rascal \* \* \* to whom the vanishment of the Ravioli brought troubrous dreams ; but it may be at once understood that his unhappiness was purely political, since Raffaella had no fancy for cads, and a cad on a throne is no better than a cad who conducts an omnibus—probably worse. Their vocations are exactly alike. An Emperor's duty is merely to make his vehicle clean, and his fare fair

## OMNIBUS.

Now I think Rascal \* \* \* felt never more shaken as to the stability of his position than on the disappearance of Raffaella Ravioli. Rascal \* \* \*, a very legitimate monarch, as titles to monarchy go, was one of those adventurous cowards formed on the model of Shakespeare's Pistol and Parolles. The world is their oyster ; they open it as best they may, but usually tell many lies by way of condiment to their oyster suppers. This man, royal—no, imperial, for *roi* involves *loi*—was in a great state of alarm when the disappearance of our Marchesa became obvious. It naturally did not occur to him that she was in an English country house, under the care of an English gentleman—about as safe quarters as you will find on the surface of this planet. He got into a dreadful state of fear. What he actually did is not of much consequence at this moment. Other events have occurred in the City of Exodus. Other events will occur, so far as one can estimate the idiosyncrasy of that lovely city. It is eternally self-destructive.

That there should be concern in the two great cities of Genesis and Exodus by reason of Raffaella's disappearance is a matter that deserves historic record. At the same time, it may be as well to indicate the fact about it. In the City of Genesis new powers come daily to the front, and there is not a wasted moment. The mysterious disappearance of a lady, being quietly placed in the hands of the police, would trouble no one except those invaluable myrmidons. Not so in the City of Exodus. There the most trivial

matter has always been an excitement. There idiocy is preferred to wisdom, misery to content, wickedness to goodness, if only a little febrile excitement can be achieved thereby. That is the very city for Rascal \* \* \* to rule. How he felt when he had lost Number Two is a matter beyond the power of my pen. What was the result in Europe is a story that has been told by abler pens than mine.

While two cities were puzzled, and while one great personentity was in abject fear, the little woman in her white furs, the Lilliputian whom Carington had known as a girl, was obeying orders at Delamere. Elinor was her gaoler; but, of course, Lucy Walter found her way in by-and-by, under some pretext. The Earl found her a charming refreshment. Mr. Carington looked on and smiled, and thought of the terrible perplexity of Rascal \* \* \*. Delamere was quiet, calm, isolate. All the while there was in Delamere the key to a myriad political secrets. How many people were in dire trouble in the two cities of Genesis and Exodus . . . especially Exodus . . . because this little lady in white fur had been carried away into the North ?

There was a confabulation between her and Mr. Carington, which, perhaps, may as well be recorded. He used to come and talk to her, you know, in her own apartment. Be pleased to imagine no harm; Carington liked to talk to a lady,—indeed, he educated several ladies of my acquaintance. And now, an old boy, he regarded Raffaella as a mere child still, though, perhaps, a trifle too old to be thrown into the air in free Florentine fashion.

*Raffaella.*—How long am I to be kept here, Mr. Carington?

*Carington.*—Are you *very* tired?

*Raffaella.*—Well, but I am in prison. Nobody likes being in prison. Please let me out.

*Carington.*—Where will you go?

*Raffaella.*—Wherever you tell me.

*Carington.*—Then why want to go? Why, my child, your dear silly illogical nonsense would make a charming duet—

Please let me out!  
Where will you go?  
Go and flirt with somebody,  
O no, no.

Please let me out,  
Else I shall cry:  
I want to flirt with somebody,  
O fie, fie!

And this, positively, is the clever child who has ruled emperors in her time. No, you are caught, Raffaella. You are my prisoner. You shall stay here just as long as I choose. Do you know why I am so cruel to you?

*Raffaella*.—You are not at all cruel, Frank. I am only too glad to be safe with you, and to have no more of that dreadful business to do. I am your very willing prisoner; and there could not be a sweeter little gaoler than Elinor. But, Frank, tell me; can you get me out of that dreadful business? I am so tired of it.

*Carington*.—Stay here, child, and you will find everything go right. I see you have no particular affection for Number One. Wait and see what will happen. Stay here. Be friends with my little Elinor. Trust me to make everything right for you. You have been a foolish child to conspire, but I cannot forget my pretty playful pet in the Florentine Gardens.

*Raffaella*.—(Sings):

Ah, the happy gardens,  
Then a child was I.  
Life, alas! it hardens :  
Why? why?  
  
Fairy fountains threw their  
Foam toward the sky ;  
Why were I and you there ?  
Why? why?

*Carington*.—You chirp very prettily, my little bird. I mean to keep you in your cage till all is safe.

*Raffaella*.—Oh, do, please.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### SARUM.

O, spire of God ! O, poem of an architect !  
O wondrous winding aisles of saintly mystery !  
Prayer blends with praise in this untroubled solitude.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

BACK to the dear old city. Bright moonlight fell upon its quiet streets and wide market-place—on the venerable Cathedral—on the quaint windings in the Cathedral-close—when Frank Noel returned to see his uncle, Canon Lovelace. It was strange to him, after his numerous and rapid adventures, to find himself back again in the quiet old city, where his great-grandfather had been famous. To a boy like Frank, the adventures of so short a time seemed wonderful; he fancied he had quite grown into middle-age in the brief period which had made him acquainted with the Great Hall and its indwellers, specially with Elinor. Frank's heretofore had been the quietest of lives: now he had found himself among the strangest of people amid the strangest of circumstances. When a young fellow, who for years has lived quietly, is suddenly plunged into the ocean of life, the con-

trast is something tremendous. Frank Noel could scarcely believe he was the same man as this evening he walked in the moonlight beneath the shadow of the marvellous spire, and knocked at the door under the round archway, where a small brass plate indicated *Canon Lovelace*.

It was late. Frank, not knowing how his uncle might be, had sent his portmanteau to the hotel. He walked in beneath the round arch, where a lamp was burning, and was admitted by the Canon's ancient butler, coëval with the Canon himself; and carefully on guard during his master's illness.

"Mr. Frank," said this fine old boy, whose very voice had an orthodox touch of port-wine in it, "I am so glad to see you. You will stay and look after the Canon, I hope."

"How is he, Laurence?"

"Not so very bad, sir, I don't think; but there's a Minx in the case."

"A what?"

"A Minx, Mr. Frank, begging your pardon. That's the only word I can think of."

Now, as Laurence had known Frank from a baby, and had often helped him to surreptitious little niceties in his pantry, from the bread and jam of early years to the glass of strong ale of later ones, he looked upon him as his especial favourite, and could use some freedom with him. Indeed, he considered that he had helped to "bring up" the young gentleman, and thought that Master Frank did him credit. The old butler and the Canon had sometimes shaken their heads over the fact that poor Frank was being spoilt between those two women, meaning his mother and grandmother; but Laurence had always consoled the Canon, by saying, "We'll have him here, sir, and alter all that."

And when Frank turned out a fine young fellow, Laurence remarked to the Canon, "I think we've made a man of him, sir." Therefore, when Frank arrived, poor old Laurence at once began pouring out his troubles to him. "Master have never had any female folk about him before, Master Frank," he said; "he has always been satisfied with what I could do for him. But I don't know what he has got in his head that he must send for this Minx."

"But where did she come from?" said Frank.

"From somewhere in the North. When master was taken ill, he said he did not like giving me so much trouble, as I was getting old, and he thought he ought to have a nurse. I told him I could do all that was necessary, but that if he wished to have a nurse, there was old Nurse Jenkins who have nursed the Close these thirty years. But master wouldn't hear of her. He had got something in his head about an advertisement in that paper he gets every Saturday afternoon, called the *Lectern*. He said that he thought he should be able

to get a nurse who would not only nurse him, but would be able to read to him and write his letters. You see, Master Frank, I'm quite ready to read to him; but what with my eyesight not being as good as it was, and I was taken away from school just as I came to three syllables in the spelling-book, I don't read quite as fast as you young people. But you know I can write letters well enough when I am not hurried."

"Yes," said Frank, and he remembered the dear old scrawl which he had received at Delamere.

"However, master told me how to answer an advertisement from the *Lectern*; and then there came a letter from an Archdeacon, saying what a wonderful young lady the Minx . . . I mean Miss Gertrude Wilkinson was. She was of the highest church principles, and I don't know what else. So master told me to write for her to come, and she came; and she's a regular Minx, and that's all I can say of her. She won't let me see master if she can help it. When I take anything up to him she takes it from me at the door, and says I shall disturb the Canon if I go in—as if I ever disturbed him! Only to think, Master Frank, that this house should be turned topsy-turvy by a woman after all these years!"

All this information was given in a half-whisper down in the hall, where the butler had received his master's nephew. The Canon in the hands of a Minx was to Frank an idea almost unimaginable. Even a Minx, recommended by a northern archdeacon, through the medium of that grave and gravid journal, the *Lectern*, seemed almost incredible to Frank. He looked at the ancient butler with surprise. The butler knew the meaning of that look, but could only reply by one of bewilderment. That his dear old master should fall into the hands of a Minx was to him as complete a puzzle as to Master Frank, who, perchance, had greater experience of such phenomena.

"Never mind, Laurence," said Frank Noel, "I dare say we shall make it all right. Tell my uncle I am here. I know he will be glad to see me when he feels well enough."

The butler went up-stairs, and returned to say, that Mr. Noel was requested to walk up. Frank, accordingly, ascended to the pleasant old room overlooking the Cathedral Close—a room full of antique books, and with pleasant window-seats and many multidudinous memoirs. Laurence showed him up with a kind of abrupt unwillingness, and left him alone with—the Minx.

It may be feared that journals like the *Lectern* are responsible for the existence of ladies like the Minx. They give a chance to the ecclesiastic adventuress—the Becky Sharp of the Church—the young person who is quite ready to take charge of any person in any parish, and who always manages to obtain archdeacons' testimonials. The Minx, as old Laurence irreverently styled her, was a Miss Gertrude Wilkinson, whose father, Dr. Wilkinson, was a school-

master, whose degree had been obtained in some Continental university. Old Wilkinson was indeed one of the most venerable humbugs that ever trod this earth's surface ; but everybody believed in him, the religious included, and therefore everybody believed in Miss Gertrude, who was at least as great an impostor as her white-haired papa.

When the Canon wanted somebody to take care of him, and an advertisement in the *Lectern* brought him into communication with the highly reputable Dr. Wilkinson's daughter, he deemed himself very fortunate. When the lady came, he was delighted. She was about thirty ; the irreverent might have styled her a buxom wench. She had fine curves of shoulder, and knew how to exhibit an enticing ankle. She took charge of the dear old Canon at once. Her archdiaconal testimonial was everything. She managed him and his affairs with the greatest coolness, driving his old servants almost wild by her off-hand way of dealing with them. The Canon himself, imagining her to be a perfect lady, and glad in his weakness to surrender himself to female management, was quite happy to be thus governed. There is, doubtless, an immense amount of pleasure in being managed by a woman, and I am one of those who would like to see women entirely managing the world. How well they would do it ! I long for petticoat government, for the complete disfranchisement of the male sex—for the time when any man who dares to have an opinion without permission (registered at the nearest post-office) of his mother or wife or daughter shall be publicly flogged. This is the inevitable civilisation of the future. I am impatient for it. The superior sex ought to assert their power.

To return to Miss Gertrude Wilkinson, whom old Laurence called the Minx. She took complete possession of the Canon, who submitted absolutely. She was rather glad to hear that a nephew had arrived ; the lively and lovely creature regarded a nephew as worth consideration, and did not anticipate the sort of fellow she found in Frank Noel. Frank was much too dull a fellow for Miss Gertrude. Frank, as may have been perceived, had his own way of looking at affairs.

He was shown, as I have said, into the presence of the Minx. He looked at her not altogether admiringly. She was dressed in a way to display her attractions to the utmost within the limits of decency. There are ladies who might walk naked without indecency ; there are women whose mode of dress always conveys some indecent idea. Of this latter kind was Gertrude Wilkinson. Her shoulders and her ankles were obtrusive. You might apply to her certain lines which the Earl of Rochester wrote concerning Mistress Nell Gwyn.

"I am afraid," she said to Frank, "that Canon Lovelace is not well enough to see you this evening. I am sure he will wish to see you to-morrow. He was most anxious for you to come."

"You don't think he is well enough to-night," says Frank. "I am very sorry. He is fortunate in having you to take care of him. Shall I be in the way here?"

"Oh, not at all. A room has been prepared for you. The Canon instructed me to ask you to make yourself quite at home."

"Thanks," said Frank. "I'll tell Laurence to send for my luggage. It is not much. How terribly cold the weather is!"

"Let me order you something, Mr. Noel," said Miss Wilkinson.

"Well," replied Frank, "if you'll make me a cup of tea, and put some brandy in it with those fair hands, I shall feel happy."

And as Frank Noel said this, he gave the Minx a look which made her think him a fool. She was quite wrong. Next time she advertises in the *Lectern* she will admit her error.

Miss Gertrude Wilkinson ordered tea, and a mutton cutlet, and some anchovy toast, and made Mr. Frank Noel extremely cozy. The old quaint room that he knew so well, with the Canon's favourite oil paintings on the wall, warmed into beauty by the flickering fire, which danced on the Claudes and Rembrandts, and lighted up the bright silver and rare old Dresden china of the tea service, and gave a kind of attractiveness even to the Minx. This young lady had resolved to be attractive in one way or the other,—there was a rather piquant combination in her of the heavenly with the earthly. When she talked of Canon Lovelace it was as if he were the most seraphic of parsons, and she the devoutest creature that ever enjoyed archidiaconal patronage and canonical comfort. When she poured out the tea and carved the cutlets, her undeniably handsome arms and shoulders came into splendid play. Frank was a little puzzled by her, but not so puzzled as he would have been had he not known Elinor. The best safeguard against being inveigled by men and women who are false, is to know those who are true. I fear I have more than once quoted that divine saying of Steele's concerning a lady, that "to love her was a liberal education;" but I doubt whether it can be quoted too often. To know a lady is to love her,—is to learn from her,—is to be refined by her; and I am not at all afraid of my wife's being jealous when I say that I love every lady I know. How they differ, these sparkling gems of ladyhood! . . . and yet are all alike in being pure gems, the true *pelluciduli lapides*. One is a ruby of passion and power; another a sapphire of sky-tinted purity; another an emerald of poetic quietude; another a diamond of brilliancy and wit. All true gems. Now Frank had found his gem, and had learnt much thereby. Elinor was the simplest child in the world, but with all the purity and sparkle of a running stream. From such a girl Methuselah himself might learn, though he had passed his nine-hundredth year. Balzac has somewhere said, that it is not remarkable that men cannot understand women, since their Creator failed to do so. As against this ferocious

French criticism I venture on the mild profanity, that if it were possible for God to learn a lesson it would be from one of His loveliest creations.

Frank had, sometime or other, learnt a great deal in a short time from Elinor. For ever she was in his mind's eye. Not for the millionth of a moment could he forget that lovely girl, so unsuspicious, independent, guileless, gay, tender, thoughtful. The lovely music of her voice dwelt in his ears; the lovely light of her eyes was always before him. The melody of a bird, the shining of the twinkling stars, were his perennial possession; but beyond them lay the influence of a serene and happy and radiant spirit, the very essence of life and light and love. This girl Elinor had unconsciously taught Frank much that he learnt as unconsciously, and her sweet fair form was always in his imagination; therefore it is not remarkable that he remained unfascinated by Miss Gertrude Wilkinson, the Minx.

She tried her best: faith!—this nephew was the very subject whereon she desired to experiment. Six feet of him or so, well knit, well dressed, not too clever . . . why he ought to be as soft as clay in the hands of

*Our Lady, the Minx*

(to use the neoteric poetaster's method of putting it). It is probable that Frank Noel would have been a mere baby in the hands of this politic young person, if he had never seen Elinor. But he had seen Elinor. He had known beauty and truth. He detected, with all his dullness, the ugliness of falsehood. Still, he ate his cutlets, drank his tea, and admired Miss Gertrude's coquettices.

She was not chary of them. She assured him that he had better not disturb his uncle that night; and herein she was supported by the doctor, who came in rather late, and found the dear old Canon in a sound sleep, and recommended that his sleep should be unbroken. Frank, finding this the case, and slightly tired with the Minx's agaceries, went off to smoke a cigar in the Close, and to see if Sarum had much changed since last he perambulated there.

It suddenly occurred to him that he would call on Mr. Pinniger, On his way to do so he dropped in for a moment at the White Hart, ecclesiastic hostelry, famous for eels, and there, by good hap, met Pinniger himself. The lawyer was amazed at the sudden rencontre.

"Why, Frank," he cried, "come down to see your uncle?"

"Yes," he answered. "I have not yet seen him, though; for the doctor says he is not well enough. I only got down this evening. There's a young woman on the premises I don't much admire."

"Ah," said Pinniger, taking a long breath, "come in and have a glass of brown sherry, Frank. The brown sherry is as good as it used to be."

They went into a private room, where a pleasant fire was burning. Over the sherry the lawyer said—

"I don't like that young woman, Frank ; she is too pious for me, though I am the Bishop's and Dean's attorney. She is, I fear, a humbug. What is her little game I cannot guess ; but she wants to get something out of the Canon, and is doing her best to prevent any one from approaching him. Now you are the right person to put a stop to this, and I'll help you. I am right glad you have come down just now. We heard you had married and gone to Australia."

"Not a bit of it," said Frank. "Old Laurence has already told me about this girl. He calls her the Minx."

"Capital !" said Pinniger. "Minx she is, every inch. Take care of her ; she'll make love to you, I'll swear. She's one of those sensuously spiritual young women who are half deaconess, half prostitute. The clergy get taken in by them terribly, for a good clergyman like your uncle naturally thinks no evil. By Jove, Noel, I'd have such women publicly flogged."

"I thought this evening she seemed very much inclined to be rather familiar," quoth Frank, "which is chiefly why I turned out for a stroll. Can't you help me to get her out of the house ? I don't like the idea of such a woman near my dear old uncle."

"I'll try," said the lawyer. "Come down to my office about twelve to-morrow ; you will have seen the Canon by that time."

Frank, wishing Pinniger good night, walked quietly home. Laurence admitted him. Laurence whispered,—

"She's about, Mr. Frank. Don't you look at her if she comes near you. She's a bad lot, I'll swear."

But Frank went straight to his room, and dreamt of Elinor.

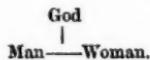
## CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM ELINOR AND RAFFAELLA.

"O little love, whose lightest line is beautiful . . .  
The brightest dewdrop on the rose that's reddiest !"

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

TRINITY in unity (I write unprofanely) is the law of the world. Everywhere there are triads. The greatest triad of all is



The life of man is utterly empty, unless he has God above him and woman with him. This is the very first lesson that should be taught : too often it is never taught at all. Frank Noel had unconsciously learned it : in lonely wanderings and ponderings he had realised the Deity, and he had seen Elinor. These two facts kept

him safe from the allurements of the most alluring Minx in the world.

When Frank next morning awoke in a quaint old-fashioned chamber, which looked out upon the great cathedral, it took him some little time to remember where he was, and why. He had seen so many people in so short a time, that his brain was in a kind of cyclone. The dreams of morning left him perplexed. The Canon, whom he had not seen, and the Minx, and butler, and attorney, whom he had, were mixed up in an odd way with the dramatic personae of Delamere.

Boyhood is imaginative; and Frank, whose growth had been slow, was even now no more than a manly boy. Slow-growing folk are the best. Boys and girls who too rapidly approach the verge of manhood and womanhood, seldom develop into fair proportions of mind and body. They are dwarfs—stunted creatures, usually short-lived. The man who is to live to a hundred is a boy at forty. As to women, well—questions of age are not polite in reference to them; but you may meet a woman of forty who is younger than a girl of eighteen. It is the difference between the ripe and the rotten—between the lady and the Minx.

The Minx, as Frank Noel opened his eyes that morning and looked through the ivy-framed casement of his chamber, was a portion of his dreams. It was rather late. The sunshine threw the shadow of the unrivalled spire across the quiet Close. The bells were ringing for service. When Frank got out of bed and went to the window, he saw the orderly and demure old maids of Sarum, trooping to church. He wondered whether he, a lad, ought to go to church. There is a time in the life of every young fellow to whom God has given imagination when the problems of life perplex and trouble him. Frank Noel, slow in growth, had as yet concerned himself little about life's problems; but when he looked through his casement at the folk going to church, he could not help wondering why there were about fifty women to one man, minor canons and choristers included.

However, he had private problems of his own to solve, so he lay in bed after the cathedral bells had ended their sacred summons, and thought over his own position and his uncle's. As to his own—did Elinor, that creature of pure natural charms, care anything about him? Frank thought so; yet was uncertain. A more precocious youngster would at an earlier date have discovered the actual truth. Frank's courage was greater anywhere than in the presence of the girl he loved. He might have been too audacious, perchance, to a girl he cared nothing about; but I hope not.

Morning service was over by the time lazy Frank Noel had arranged his dreams. When he took his next look at the Close, the demure virgins of Sarum were going home to lunch. He began to

think it was time to ring his bell ; when he did so Laurence appeared.

"Letter for you, Mr. Frank," says the butler. "Thought I'd better take charge of it."

That letter bore the Carlisle postmark, and was sealed with the crest of the Caringtons—a goshawk, with the motto, *Frank and Free* : and, indeed, it was addressed in that curious old-fashioned hand-writing which was common to men of Mr. Carington's time—a scrawl, that looked careless, yet was perfectly legible. In these days men write carefully, and are perfectly illegible.

However, Frank's epistle did not come from Carington, and I don't know that Frank cared much about that. Pity the boy could not have seen how it was written, for Elinor was in the daintiest disorder of dress at the time, and the Marchesa was lazily lying in bed, wondering what Number One thought of the position of affairs. Mr. Carington had said to Elinor,—

"Write Frank Noel a little letter ; he will be lonely down at Salisbury by himself."

Elinor, in the lightest attire, that afternoon remembered the mandate, and sat down to obey. You see, she was acting as gaoler, and she was going to dress for dinner ; and her prisoner was dreaming the hours away with that superb depth of indolence which always belongs to the highly excitable temperament. The maddest people are ever the laziest.

"To whom are you writing ?" asks the little Marchesa, a smaller creature amid the bed-clothes than in her favourite white furs. "Come, Elinor, tell me ; is it a lover ? Of course, it must be, or you would not be so anxious about it."

The Ravioli, though she had known Elinor so few hours, talked to her as if she were her sister, calling her by newly invented names, and chaffing her quite merrily. She was only a conspirator out of sheer fun, and because she loved the swift movement of life. There was no real wickedness in her, but a curious lack of conscience, and a strong delight in intense excitement. She was the very Ariel of conspiracy.

"I am writing a note by Mr. Carington's request," says that little hypocrite Elinor. Of course, it was quite true, this statement.

"Now, may I see it when you have done ?" asked the Ravioli ; "and may I add a postscript ? Of course, I mean if it is to a gentleman. If it is to a lady, I am not in the least interested."

"You shall see the letter, if you like, and you shall write a postscript," said Elinor ; "and I hope that will stop you from trying to tease me."

"O dear no, it won't. I must have some one to tease. I am a prisoner, and you are my warder, and I shall revenge myself by plaguing you."

"Will you?" said Elinor; "wait and see what revenge I shall take."

So Frank Noel got a curious letter, running thus . . .

"DEAR MR. NOEL,

"I am told by Mr. Carington to write and tell you what is going on at Delamere, for he thinks you may be lonely at Salisbury.

"There is nothing to tell you, except that it is very cold, and that I have a very mysterious companion. I have promised that she shall read my letter, if she likes, and even add a postscript. Nobody knows who she is, except Mr. Carington, who seems to know everything. She is very charming and very tiresome, and I really wish you were here to flirt with her and keep her quiet. You wouldn't look at me if you saw her; she is just like a little white mouse. I am writing this about her that is quite true, though I have promised her she shall see my letter.

"I do hope your dear uncle is better, and that your visit will do him good. What little I have heard you and Mr. Carington say of him makes me sure that he is a man I should love, if I knew him, and he would let me. You are to write to me or to Mr. Carington, and tell us all about it. You may write to me, if you like, sir; but, if you do, you must be very respectful. Do you quite understand?

"I miss Mr. Fitz-Rupert dreadfully. What a charming specimen he is of the young English gentleman! Don't you think so?

"It is dreadfully cold. I think I said that before; but, really, it is so cold here, one can't help saying things several times over. It makes one's mind chatter as well as one's teeth.

"E."

Frank Noel laughed at this wickedly worded crotchet. Then he looked curiously at the postscript, writ in a quaint fantastic Italian hand, with letters whose heads and tails were like shadows in the sunset, while the general movement of the manuscript resembled wheat before the wind:—

"I am allowed to write you a note, sir. Who am I? Do you think you can guess. I am a wicked wild little mystery, old enough to be mother of your sweetheart. She is the prettiest purest naughtiest English girl that ever I saw. She is a primrose; I am a passion-flower. She is a ring-dove; I am a wood-pigeon. She is in love with you; I am teasing her. She has promised to send this postscript. She is a girl to keep her promises. Ask her to make a promise to you.

"I, too, sign with a single letter.

"R."

"Well," thought Frank Noel, "this is odd. Whence came this wondrous clever writer of postscripts? There was nobody at Delamere when I left, except that little monkey, Lucy. This mystery is

somebody fresh. Old Carington is a master of mysteries. ‘A little white mouse,’ says Elinor; ‘old enough to be Elinor’s *mater*,’ says the lady herself. Queer! Well, it was good of Carington to make Elinor send me a line; and I suppose she would not have done it unless he had ordered it. He makes everybody obey orders, dear old boy.

Frank Noel, having read his letter with its mysterious postscript several times over, dressed and descended, resolving this morning to see his uncle, whatever obstructions Miss Gertrude Wilkinson might contrive to place in his way. He found that young person comfortably seated at a late breakfast. There was fragrance of tea and aroma of coffee, and crisp thin slices of Wiltshire bacon tempted the palate, and muffins were being kept comfortably warm before the fire. The Minx was in cosy quarters, and knew how to appreciate them. Laurence’s scornful smile was something to look upon, as he ushered Frank into the room.

“ You are just in time for breakfast, Mr. Noel,” says Gertrude Wilkinson. “ I am obliged to be late, as I must first of all attend to the Canon.”

“ How is my uncle this morning?” said Frank, who had decided on his line of action, and who sat down to eat and drink with perfect coolness. “ Laurence, get me some claret; I don’t care for tea and coffee. My uncle will be able to see me this morning, no doubt, Miss Wilkinson.”

“ I hope so,” she said, “ though, indeed, he is very weak.”

“ Ha! seeing me will strengthen him. Cut me some of that brawn, on the sideboard, Laurence. We are famous for brawn here, in the Close, as I dare say you have discovered, Miss Wilkinson.”

Frank’s notion was not a bad one; he thought he would talk to the young person and to Laurence as if they were on equal terms. After all, Laurence was the one to reasonably complain; he, a dignified ecclesiastic butler, with a perfect palate for port, to be levelled with a pert little chit of a “lady-housekeeper.” Certes, hard upon Laurence . . . who was to the Minx as an artist is to an adventurer. She, however, was the person most annoyed, for the butler possessed the humility of true genius.

Frank Noel made a hearty breakfast, glanced through the paper, spoke much less to Miss Wilkinson than to Laurence, who remained in the room during the meal. When he had finished, Frank said to the butler,—

“ Laurence, go and ask my uncle if he can see me.”

Miss Wilkinson rose from her seat.

“ Really, Mr. Noel,” she said, “ it would be most unwise to disturb Canon Lovelace so abruptly. I cannot answer for the consequences.”

“ It is not necessary you should, Miss Wilkinson. I came from Cumberland to see my uncle, and I fear he will be grieved I have delayed so long.”

The Minx was standing by the fireplace, looking very angry indeed . . . her face flushed, her hands clenched. She did not want to lose her influence over the Canon, though it would be hard to say what she expected to gain by keeping it. Nothing is more difficult to guess than the motives which will actuate a person of inferior nature. Very angry was she ; angrier still when Laurence entered, saying,—

“The Canon wishes you to walk up, Mr. Frank.”

There is just now a feminine rebellion among the women who, morally or mentally or physically, are unfit to be wives ; one of the products thereof is that often pretty but usually unwholesome fungus, the lady-housekeeper. The cases in which the creature thus named has done harm, of one kind or another, are only too numerous. No one who has studied the developments of modern life can, on this point, be doubtful. The position is a difficult one for the best of girls, and would be shunned by most good girls who could find any other way of living respectably ; is beset with temptations for any girl not perfectly good. Now, I am not going to say that the feminine rebellion is entirely unjustifiable—no rebellions are. Something may be urged for even Fenians and Communists. It is credibly stated that the true leader of this sexual revolt is the Superior Woman, and of the Superior Woman all men must stand in awe, though the indomitable son of Peleus and Thetis knew how to treat Penthesilea. Unluckily, the Superior Woman has not got this new insurrection all to herself. You hear of her at South Kensington, at medical schools, at places where lady-artists draw from the nude model ; in magazines where neoteric and esoteric thought is expressed in sesquipedalian style, to the speedy ruin of those confiding capitalists whom the Superior Women induce to establish them. I regard the Superior Woman as a superb phenomenon, though I would rather not have her in the same house with me. I obtain instruction by looking at her through the telescope of imagination. But the Superior Woman, while she conquers mankind with marvellous power, has her own troubles. No living thing is without its parasite. The Superior Woman, gloriously emancipating herself and her sex, emancipates, among others, the Minx. That young person thinks that she also will be free—will make a career for herself—will carry delight into the bosoms of families, especially families whose heads are widowers. The Superior Woman naturally detests and despises the Minx ; but the returns of the Statistical Society show that widowers foolishly prefer the latter to the former. Now, widowers, it may be observed (specially such of them as can afford to keep a Minx), are an influential class of society : they almost always want to marry again, either to get a mother for their children, or because they made a mistake the first time, or because they didn't. The third class are an infinitesimal proportion of the whole.

It is calculated that 99·95 per cent. of widowers marry Minxes ; but only one has been discovered during the present century who wedded a Superior Woman . . . and she was his deceased wife's sister.

This digression leaves Miss Gertrude Wilkinson in the breakfast-room, red with anger at being foiled, for she had some vague notion in her head of keeping Frank apart from his uncle, the Canon—peradventure of flirting with him in the intervals of her attendance on the old gentleman. It also leaves Laurence showing Frank upstairs ; but now the old butler may throw open the door, and leave uncle and nephew together. Very worn and ill looked Canon Lovelace, in an easy chair, by the fireside, with some weak invalid broth on a small table, near him, and a book . . . be sure ! . . . in his tremulous hand. It was Coleridge's *Church and State*, a volume that gives much displeasure to any modern Radical who is capable of reading it.

That such a man as Canon Lovelace should care to have a Minx about him, may seem strange ; yet, remember that saying of a great poet—

“Who meanees no guile beguiled soonest shall.”

To the Canon, who, a veteran bachelor, had always been an admirer of ladies, and was a favourite to the last at those pleasant tea-parties in Sarum Close, where Watteau groups of womanhood surrounded Sevres china, and Keble and Pusey and Liddon were surface-subjects, and there was often a game of whist in the end—there seemed no guile in this archidiaconally testimonialled young person. Canon Lovelace might irreverently be described as a general lover ; he liked ancient ladies who could chat with him of his own old days, when Tract XC. was unwritten, and the deep questions of genuflexion and auricular confession had not occurred to a race of rectors who could ride across country and drink port ; he also liked the pretty girls of the new time, whose brainlets were all agog with fresh theologic fantasies, and who found intense delight in daily service, until they married, and who, though they of course worshipped curates, were seldom allowed by their mammas to marry them. His perfect guilelessness made him the easiest possible victim of pretty plausible Miss Gertrude ; so it was lucky Frank had turned up at this time.

The Canon was too weak to talk much. Frank explained that he had been induced to delay seeing him ; and his uncle seemed to think it was all for the best. It was very clear to Frank Noel that this young woman had made the Canon believe in her, and greatly puzzled he felt how to act. In a sick room, what chance has a man against a woman ?

“I wish Elinor were here,” he thought to himself. He had begun to be quite a believer in Elinor’s capacity. And he did not at all like to see his uncle so obviously at the mercy of a Minx.

“I hope you will stay, now you are here, Frank,” said the Canon,

in a very weak voice. "I cannot see much of you; but I shall be so glad if you will come in once or twice a day. Laurence and Miss Wilkinson will take care that you are comfortable; she, I assure you, is an invaluable person."

Frank Noel saw it was vain to say a word against the Minx just then, so contented himself with the unuttered reflection that *invaluable* is a word with two meanings, diametric in contrast. He also thought Miss Gertrude Wilkinson invaluable.

The conversation between Frank and his uncle was brief, for the Canon was too feeble to prolong it. Frank took leave, promising to remain at Salisbury, and pressing the Canon to summon him whenever he found himself at all worse. Then our friend walked rapidly downstairs, and out into the Close, taking no notice whatever of Miss Gertrude, who "happened" (as Corporal Trim would say) to be passing through the hall as he took his hat. Frank was full of mixed feelings. He pitied his uncle, evidently very ill; he was angry with the Minx for taking up her position in the Canon's household, speculating, it was easy to see, on getting something solid thereby; he was disgusted with himself for not knowing what best to do. He cared not a doit though this young woman got a legacy from his uncle; but he hated to see the noble feeble old man in such bad hands. Bitterly blew the east wind as he took two or three sharp turns up and down the Close; at last, he walked rapidly out of it, saying to himself, "Well, I must see Pinniger; and then I'll write to Carington, and tell him all about it, and ask his advice."

The keen eyes of the Minx had been watching him as he walked. She laughed gaily as she lost sight of him, turned from the window to an easy chair by the fire, and buried herself in a scrofulous French novel.

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#### CHAPTER, XXVII.

##### A MYSTERY.

"All mighty towns hold mysteries inscrutable—  
But holds not measureless ocean stranger mysteries?"

QUICKLY, but with sufficient style and distinction, the Prince and Princess Oistravieff were married a second time under the auspices of the Ambassador. At once they were to start for the Continent, open now to the Prince, as he had made peace with the mysterious societies. The wedding was effected with all possible rapidity, for the Prince desired to make immediate use of his newly obtained freedom, since he was heartily tired of his imprisonment in this detested island. Having married Paulovna, partly through fear and

partly through policy, he was resolved to have some enjoyment of life in return. Italy was his object ; he had a yacht at Cowes, and determined to take her round to the Mediterranean and meet the slow-coming spring. He had the Russian love of luxuriant travel. His yacht, a comfortable schooner, was fitted up with voluptuous costliness. Save for certain superb pictures, too warm in conception and colour, his state-rooms, all silk and gold, might have been the boudoir of queens.

Paulovna made no objection to any arrangement. She seemed languid and terrified as she went through the marriage ceremony with this man. The change observed in her by keen-eyed Carington had already become more clear. Bystanders wondered at her listlessness as she was driven away to the terminus in the Prince's handsome chariot and four. She looked more like a ghost than a bride.

The yacht ran gaily down channel with a fair bridal wind. Though so early in the year, there was neither fog nor rain, and the Prince, enjoying his freedom, his dinners, his Heidseck, was almost gallant to his wife. She could not help yielding a trifle to the influence of sea air and swift change of scene, and gained colour and appetite, and half forgot her past wickedness, her dread of impending danger.

The voyage, thus merrily begun, was not destined in like manner to end. Late at night, as the schooner passed the Straits, a gun-boat shot out from the African shore, and threw up a rocket as a signal for her to shorten sail. The steamer was alongside immediately ; a score of men, all armed, all masked, swarmed on her deck, and their leader sternly said to the frightened crew—

"Prince and Princess Oistravieff are below, I know. Show me to their cabin."

Resistance to such force was vain. They rushed below. Oistravieff and Paulovna were both asleep in their berths. Before they were sufficiently awake to guess at their position, both were bound with ropes, just as they were, hurried over the side of the yacht, and placed on board the gun-boat. The whole affair seemed to occur in ten minutes. The amazed captain and crew of the yacht stood on deck watching the gun-boat's lessening lights, in a state of helpless wonder as to what had been done and what they ought to do. The captain, an imperturbable Englishman, silently lighted a pipe, and tried to get some wisdom out of smoke ; but the steward, a quick little Irishman, exclaimed—

"'Bout ship and back to England. Put in at Falmouth."

This was done : the report brought home by the crew caused the sensation of the year. Police and journalists were all alive ; Prince Oistravieff's yacht was overhauled by the one and described by the other, but with no special result ; his confidential servant, Repnin, was officially examined, and unofficially, but could or would tell nothing. The Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty

made stringent inquiries about the mysterious gun-boat, but she was untraceable.

Still, as always is the case when a mysterious affair occurs, there leaked out rumours as to the previous career of the Prince and Princess Oistravieff . . . as to a double marriage and a dark conspiracy . . . especially as to the fact that the Princess was no other than that illustrious incognita, Lily Page. If editorial wisdom was baffled by the problem itself, editorial eloquence had now a grand opportunity, and abundantly justified itself. A Russian Prince marrying a light-o'-love, and decorating his yacht for her in a style fit for royalty, but with embellishments unfit for modest eyes, and then the wicked being caught and carried off by a corsair, was a series of events not often vouchsafed to the fluent leader-writer. The grandeur of the style was adequate to the gravity of the lesson. Princes and Minxes alike were suitably admonished. Nothing so startling had happened for ages, and the breakfasts of London were eaten with better appetite now that the morning paper brought so piquant an addition to what Tom Moore called

“Your ghost  
Of a breakfast in England—your cursed tea and toast.”

As for that gun-boat, it steamed rapidly away through the Straits. The Prince, a coward as we know, was insensible with terror. Paulovna only exclaimed in her terror—

“Yes, it has come at last. I knew it would ;” and then tried to pray. Both were carelessly thrown, bound and almost naked as they were, into a dark cabin below, and no sound came near them save the throbbing of the engine and the churning of the water. Oistravieff was deadened by fear ; but poor Paulovna, of keener and stronger mind, was widely wakeful.

“Where are we going ?” she thought ; “what will happen to us ? I am rightly treated for marrying this villain, and for trying to kill my best friend. O, if I were free for a week, I would kill Number One !”

On she went to a dreadful fate, the great sea roaring, the strong engine crushing it down, the harsh ropes cutting her tender limbs, the cold freezing her through ; yet she could not fall into the fortunate stupidity of her husband-coward. Frank Noel in the Cathedral Close, reading the papers with this wondrous news in them, remembered Oistravieff as a liar and coward, and did not immensely regret his fate. Mr. Carington, in the great hall at Langton Delamere, getting the same information, was perhaps less surprised than any other Englishman. It reached him at breakfast, in an evening paper which was sent him by post ; he was breakfasting alone, for Lucy was waiting on the Earl, but Rachette had consoled him in his loneliness by an appetizing service. Alas ! the worthy *chef's* brilliant little dishes, specially designed for Mr. Carington, were lost on him this morning. He sent for Lucy Walter.

"Lucy," he said, "how is Lord Delamere this morning?"

"Much better, sir. He would be glad to see you."

"I shall be glad to see him," quoth Mr. Carington, and went to his apartment, where he found his lordship in high spirits after a noble sleep. He showed him the paper, which the Earl read in silence.

"By Jove, Carington," he said, when he reached the end of the story, "we shan't see that poor devil again. He was a bad fellow, even for a Russian; but I had known him too long and too intimately to cut him dead. What will they do with them?"

"Who are 'they'? is the question. I suppose it must be Number One. We must take good care of the little Ravioli, Delamere."

"Suppose either you or I were to marry her?" said the Earl, laughing. "Are you going to show her this?"

"Certainly; but I wished you to see it first. You and I can see what is going on . . . a war between conspirators on thrones and conspirators in cellars. Still, what good would it be for us to do our duty and communicate all that we know to the Foreign Office? Such fools are they in that department, that either they would not believe us, or would give our secret information to the very people who ought not to have it. That poor cowardly Oistravieff; it is worse for him than my godson's fist. I suppose they'll make him walk the plank?"

"Well, go and frighten the Marchesa, Frank, while I think over the matter. So far as I see, you are right, and our line is to be wisely ignorant."

Mr. Carington took the paper and went to the Marchesa, who was at breakfast with Elinor. To her he said—

"Run away, child. You may take a slice of bread and butter with you, if you are very hungry. I have to talk secrets."

Elinor went, with a smile, without a slice. Mr. Carington abridged for the Marchesa the circuitous statement of the paper. She was startled, and turned pale.

"O Frank!" she exclaimed, "I told you I should get into dreadful trouble."

"What! here? Do you think a gun-boat can steam up these hills?"

"Ah, but Number One has a long arm."

"Has he?" laughed Carington. "Well, to make up for it, his legs are much too short . . . though they won't be too short to run away some day."

"Oh, but this *does* frighten me."

"It need not. The Earl proposes that either he or I should marry you, if you are very much afraid."

"I was never good enough for you, Frank," she said, and began to weep.

"You baby, Raffaella! Let's have neither tears nor fears; you are safe here, and you shall not leave till all peril is over. It won't be long."

"Oh, how do you know?" she asked eagerly. She was April-born: fear and grief and curiosity and fun followed each other over the sky of her mind, like cloud and rain and mist and light.

"Number One is a coward: I mean to frighten him."

She laughed and clapped her tiny ring-fettered diamond-sprinkled hands, exclaiming—

"O what fun!"

"Not for him!" thought Mr. Carington, but said it not.

Lord Delamere and Mr. Carington held their peace, and left the Foreign Office and the police to adroitly bungle and ingeniously stumble; but some one else took the trouble to furnish a bit of curious information. It was in the form of a letter, posted at Charing Cross, and written in Russian. It said—

"Go to the Red House at Wandsworth, for some time occupied by conspirators, and you will discover something of the Oistravieffs."

This letter was addressed in a feminine hand to the Chief of Police.

The Red House looked dreary when visited by a detachment of intelligent officers. No sign of life. All shutters shut; the walled-in garden a picture of desolation. The front door had to be broken open, for it was heavily barred within. There was a suffocating smell of damp and decay in the rooms. The police opened the shutters and let in the light of day, then searched the place thoroughly from cellar to garret. In one room only found they anything; this was the chamber wherein Lily Page had received the Prince Oistravieff, to her harm and to his, on a certain memorable night. The charming furniture of the room was now a chaos. Gilt chairs, broken mirrors and lustres, crashed decanters and glasses, lying for the policemen's heavy boots to tread into the carpet; pictures gashed with cuts from sword and dagger. What had been the last scene in that ghastly chamber, who can guess?

The only stedfast sight there was the ghastliest of all. On the table lay the corpse of a woman, clothed only in a night-dress, bound with cords, a long sharp foreign dagger struck so strongly through her left breast that it penetrated the board beneath. On her bosom lay a square of paper, with these words in Russian—

"Paulovna Oistravieff,  
Princess and traitress."

*(To be continued.)*